Restlessness and Reality

George A. Miller

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RESTLESSNESS AND REALITY

By
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IF, AND HOW?

IF life to be endurable must yield some satisfying sense of the ultimate worth-whileness of All Things; and

IF the values of a contented mind and happy heart surpass those of material things and emotional thrills; and

IF the powers of the world to come may supply abundant energies for daily life; and

IF with all our getting and spending we inwardly know that we are not finding that satisfying portion for which our hearts are hungry;

THEN our restlessness of mind must be due primarily to faulty personal contacts with that Spiritual Reality which dwells in eternity and responds to every sincere approach.

One Sunday afternoon two men who had been attending a religious convention set out on foot for their home town, seven or eight miles away. Tragedy had marked the closing days of the gathering and they walked downcast. Presently they picked up a third person and the talk ran on current events and their significance. In due time they reached their destination and invited the Stranger to supper. As he gave thanks they

really saw him for the first time and recognized the very Man they had thought dead. They would have given everything they possessed that afternoon to have seen him, yet he had walked with them and they did not know him. "Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way?" they said one to another.

Are we also hungry-hearted and under-energized, walking with heads down, in the very presence of Him who is the Bread of Life and to whom all power has been given? There are times when our hearts burn within us and we know that He who is able to supply all our needs is not far from us.

Our problem is how to make personal and effective contacts with that Heart of All Things which Jesus taught us to call "Our Father."

I

THE MISSING NOTE

He came to me, a man with an interesting high-salaried position, good health, an excellent family and the envy of most of his friends. The spirit of confidence came upon us and we talked intimately of our reaction to life. After a moment of silence he broke out with, "What I want to know is, what it's all about, anyway?" Within a year he resigned his place and was looking for something different.

In a vigorous and interesting American town of twenty thousand people a perplexed mother told me she was troubled about her twenty-year-old daughter. There were really no advantages there for the girl; the family must move—somewhere else, in order that she might have a chance.

On the deck of an ocean liner I met a man from the West, with his family, journeying to the Eastern seaboard. His daughters had not done too well in school and he was taking them to Washington as an educational trip. There were no advantages for them at home, it seemed.

I stayed overnight in the palace of a multimillionaire who showed me every attention and

talked much of his eagerness to buy a dog of which he had heard, a dog that could jump farther than any other dog in the country. He just had to have that dog. We rode to the station in a five-thousand-dollar car, but he had a number of better ones and was tired of this one. He was much annoyed by a slight change in the order of service in his church.

In a far-away city I met a young fellow who had risen from nothing to a good position of some responsibility. Three months previously he had grown restless, left his work, beat about from pillar to post for two months, humbly asked for his old berth and was working well—for the present. "He's a good boy if he could only hold steady," his employer said.

What was the matter with these people and what is the matter with millions more uneasy souls who never can continue for any length of time in one place of abode, but must constantly shift about in search of some new and exciting thing? Allow fifty per cent for that commendable upreaching restlessness which is to a man's credit, and there yet remains the uneasy running about that marks us as a fidgety people. The average employee feels that he could do better elsewhere, the social devotees are ever trying to keep up with or get ahead of their rivals, business is one vast competition, professional men suffer

more than the rest of us know from overcrowding among specialists, our personal bank accounts are all too small, the ships that we pass at sea are so much finer than those on which we happen to be traveling!

This little book is written for people who feel that they are missing something at the heart of life. We do our best to keep up with the new inventions and interests, and sometimes we read the latest books; but in spite of all that motor cars, radios, movies, and the "best sellers" can do for us, we are restless at heart. There is a persistent sense of something beyond all this. There are moments when we know the vibrations of eternity in our hearts and feel that we are potentially greater than our attainments.

Our lives ought to be full and satisfying, but in a venturesome and virile age we hear inner whispers of something better, of a universe of spirit and life. Full our lives are—of surface values. Our efficiency harnesses every energy except the power of the Spirit. In the drive and whirl of life how are we to attain satisfying contacts with spiritual reality?

There is no lack of proposed remedies. We are hearing of a new social liberty acquired by discarding the moral standards and social conventions built up through long ages of experience. The iconoclasts talk of "de-bunking," a

process by which we are to be freed from the constraining faith of the fathers and follow after strange and self-appointed prophets. We are to let ourselves go; to get a thrill out of anything that produces high excitement, to get and spend and speed with the crowd; to eat, drink, and go the pace, for we shall be a long time dead. So indeed we shall be, starved to death at heart. The ancient theory of predestination reappears under the guise of a mechanistic universe in which we become a fleck of dust on the rim of the whirling wheels of inexorable fate. The universe is a vast, impersonal machine that "invented itself" and then began a plunge through time to some final, cosmic self-destruction. Believe this, and there follows the inescapable doom of the spirit.

But there is abundant hope in the very dissatisfactions of the age. Men are turning to something other than noise and speed as a cure for restlessness. There is a flood of new books on religion. The theology, philosophy, psychology, apologetics and mechanics of religion are being discussed and interpreted, and people are buying the books. When an essentially devotional book runs into the hundreds of thousands of sales and lists with the "best sellers" on the news stands, there must be a reason. Amid all the confusion there are serious-minded men who are trying to

find their way through the maze to God, and some of them are attaining that for which their hearts hunger. There must be for many more the same positive approach to reality that makes us to know that we are potential sons of God.

It is not a matter of scholarship or special gifts. Every man must think his own way through the puzzle of life, but we think best when we think in the Light promised to every sincere seeker after truth. The Way, the Truth and the Life are for us all alike, and he who will may join the march toward the heavenly country. Honesty and intelligence being equal, one man's personal experience and moral reaction are as valid as another's, and each man's test becomes final for himself.

Just why people behave as they do is not always explainable on rational grounds. There are conduct motives deeper within us than logic and rhetoric can discover. Where we cannot reason our way through to certainty, we can sometimes dig down into our intuitions and find there foundations that will bear the strains of our hopes and fears and strivings in a shifty world. There is a behaviorism of the spirit that deserves close attention and that sometimes compensates for a good deal of the misbehaviorism of our imperfect minds. We cannot analyze the heart's persistent quest for satisfaction, but we

can know when we find the answer to our uneasy questionings.

This uneasiness sometimes finds expression in the ecclesiastical wanderings of people who are both restless and religious. There is apt to be an underlying cause for much sermon tasting and church visiting. The wandering sheep may be breaking over the fences because of innate perversity of disposition or it may be because they are hungry. There are always a few unbalanced souls looking for some new and startling thing. The most of us, however, are quick to recognize the note of sincerity and sympathy when we hear it, and we will follow the shepherd who knows where the good pastures are.

This widespread restlessness is often closely related to a profound timidity. When we once understand what a quaking lurks in the depths of human hearts we have the pass key to a lot of psychological locks. This same uncertainty that we ourselves know also hides behind brass buttons and pompous official paraphernalia, and, knowing this, we understand our cue in many otherwise confusing situations. It is a waste of nervous energy to become embarrassed by the big, imposing people; inwardly they, too, are lonely and ill at ease. The grand front is often put up to hide a nervous soul.

We accomplish little by crying "Don't" into

the ears of the fad-followers. The cure is neither negative nor simple. Neither prohibitions nor logic nor speed nor speculation will supply the needed spiritual calories to the hungry-hearted. Doctrinal declamation will not do it. "Give them doctrinal preaching and give it to them hard," counseled a veteran to a young pastor, perplexed by the wandering tendencies of his hungry flock. But the youth knew better than to follow the advice. Hard doctrine may prove indigestible for people whose trouble is not with their mental stomachs but with their hungry hearts. The issues of life flow from fountains deeper than the shifting waters of creedal statement.

The restless we have always with us. Do I not know them?—the eager, earnest people who look up from the pews, hoping for at least a lunch for their uneasy selves and wishing that the preacher may not forget to "put the cookies on the lower shelf," where they can reach them without theological stepladders. There they are, the kindly and honest souls that plod along, secretly expecting some day to pass over the Jordan and eat of the fruit of the promised land; the restless people who slip away at times and go off to some other church or mission or circle or seance or religious circus, looking for something to satisfy the inner ache that never quite ceases! I know them, for I have sometimes felt

that way myself and have wanted to find my way out of my spiritual cage to the free air of God's good universe of light and truth. There must be a better way, and there is.

II

SUBSTITUTES FOR REALITY

THERE is no materialistic explanation of our inner restlessness. Never was life so full of things devised to satisfy human wants and never were so many of them within the reach of multitudes of men. We would all be happy if abundance of things could fill the empty place in our hearts.

We are not, however, earth-bound all the time. There are moments when we know the nearness and certainty of things divine. Sometimes the clouds lift and we glimpse the clear summits of eternity and know because we know that we know. Then the mists of care again dim our eyes and we are back in the drive and whirl of things and begin to wonder what it is all about.

In spite of our generally poor receptivity we know that there are heavenly voices about us. The angels of Bethlehem are singing now and singing for us if we can hear them. Sometimes we do. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. It is our dullness of ear, our failure of consciousness to connect that defeat us. The winds of the Spirit blow about us, laden with the powers of

an endless life, and they are ours if we learn how to run up our sails and mills and receive their energies into our lives. "Take thou the dullness of my soul away," we pray with George Croley's noble hymn.

If we could really make connections with actuality all the time, we would do as well as we know and act as wisely as we look. It is the missing connection that throws us off the track, and we sometimes see apparently intelligent people do the most foolish things, and sometimes we remember our own records, and blush. If we could segregate all the foolish people in the world, without depopulating the globe, we might not be able to tell them from the rest by their looks, or their passing marks in an intelligence test.

Since search for something is of the essence of conscious existence, and the higher the form of life the more persistent the seeking, it is not strange that men are everywhere trying to get through some symbol to the reality beyond. The savage before his wooden image, the devout Romanist with his silver crucifix, the theosophist with his abstractions, the Christian Scientist with his gospel of illusion, the sacramentarian with his dependence on ceremony and formula, the idealist with his sense of something better beyond, the social workers with their evangel of

service, the unnumbered hosts toiling upward through the night in search of the unseen and eternal Goodness at the heart of all things—these are all feeling their way through their own inner gloom to a Something Ultimate for which their hearts are longing and without which their lives run empty.

Back of and within this searched-for objective of every man exists the Final Fact, the ultimate "I Am that I Am" of time and space and being. It makes a vast personal difference whether or not satisfying personal contacts are possible with this Ultimate Good. By our success or failure here we finally stand or fall. Every other problem of time and eternity hangs on this.

So far so good; but in practice there is a general and disconcerting tendency to seek out and follow certain age-old substitutes for reality. Jesus met the three most universal of these in his experience in the wilderness, and they were not new then. From the beginning until now men have been tempted to find the great good in things, in thrills and in illusion. To accumulate material goods as food for the spirit, to experience nervous excitement and to follow the gilded illusions of power, office and position, these are our temptations in the wilderness of our distracting modern life.

The fundamental delusion is that any of these

substitutes will satisfy the heart of a man, provided only that he can get enough of them. Napoleon with his delusion of military conquest, the super-rich of all times, with their things possessed and the thrill-hunting devotees of a "good time," testify to the conviction that satisfaction is to be based on numbers and quantity. "More of everything" is the insistent cry of the man who thinks that happiness depends on size, numbers, and costs. And this very illusion itself shuts our eyes to the palpable historical fact that no man ever yet admitted that he had enough, so long as he followed substitutes.

It is not strange that men look to material things for satisfaction. They seem so solid and permanent, these goods that can be bought and sold and gained and lost; that are so limited that the more we have of them the less there is for someone else. To live in a fine house brings a sense of self-respect and social importance. High-powered cars and motor boats serve as an index of purchasing power. Stocks, bonds, and bank accounts lift a man in his own estimation and bring a sense of security not to be despised. Dodge and defeat the tax collector as men may, they secretly rejoice in his findings and takings.

Things do have their use and place, but when they get into first place and crowd out the values of mind and spirit, life goes out of balance. The

more we have the more restless we become. We are on the wrong track if we think that a man's life consists of the abundance of the things that he possesses.

There are those who run after thrills as the great good of life. Jazz, speed, excitement, social climbing, office, influence, cocktail parties, and "playing with fire" are evidences of emotional response to the life about us, and they all follow the law of the illusion that ultimate values lie in thrills, provided, of course, that we can get enough of them. The nerve specialists can tell us the too frequent results of trying to get enough. The devotees of illusion! We have them always with us. There is almost no limit to what can be put across if only it promises a substitute for those satisfactions that find their living roots in the soil of moral sanity. Men will play with ouija boards, buy worthless stocks, declare that pain and sin are nonexistent, believe in perpetual motion, visit the fortune tellers, throw away in dissipation the wages they have saved, attend midnight seances in darkened rooms, run after queer fads, get the gift of tongues, listen to Hindu Suawmis, accept as the key to all mysteries something discovered before Socrates was a boy.

Institutionalism has its high value in the mechanics of the life of the spirit and owes much of

its staying qualities to its seeming solidity and permanence in human life. It is so easy to understand, so approachable, so imposing, so reliable in its ministry to our fumbling approach to life realities. Ecclesiasticism sets up an imposing front before our perplexed eyes. High mass in the cathedral makes an impact on our consciousness never to be forgotten. It looks like reality itself, and its combination of mystery, magic, and material substance forms one of the most powerful psychological appeals ever made to the human mind. Its human originators were exceedingly astute.

Clothe a person with all this panoply of power and prestige and it is not strange that men will drop the hard search for direct relations with God and gratefully accept the priestly absolution as a welcome substitute. "It is so much easier to confess to the priest than to the person I have wronged," exclaimed a pupil in a mission school. It is easier, but it cuts the soul off from ultimate contact with reality.

There is a substitution of our own dreams for the solid values that we ought to be seeking at any price. Dreams have their high and useful place, but as substitutes for action and displacements of direct approach to reality they may separate us from the very values we seek. Our own illusions of mind may cut us off from the

facts of the life about us and make us impotent to remedy the things we dream of bettering.

All these faddists, dreamers, and get-rich-someway people, so far as they are sincere and reasonably intelligent, are looking for something. There is a reason for their restlessness. They feel that they are not getting out of life that which makes it ultimately worth while. "I want to get a kick out of life," expostulated a man, when I remonstrated with him over time spent with a group of amusement-followers. An old fellow who had successfully joined every other church in town came to mine with a duly attested letter of transfer, saying wistfully, "I thought, brother, that perhaps I might find here a square meal for a hungry soul." Of course I told him that what he needed was exercise.

We all are looking for a sense of the ultimate worth-whileness of all things, a satisfaction of the inner man in the moments of highest moral vision. We need to get through and back of all symbols and substitutes and seeming and seeking to final and direct personal grips with the actuality of All Things, and to know that at the heart of the universe is a personal God who knoweth our frame, who remembereth that we are dust, who has compassion on our weakness and living helpfulness for our strivings after the Great Good. When we make such contacts we know

by our own inner consciousness that there is an infinite difference between substitutes and reality.

It is a fact of experience that everybody is hungry-hearted. That is why we behave as we do and act like human beings. Most of us are consciously eager for understanding of life and for that satisfaction which we feel must be somehow not far from us, at least in our best moments. Jesus dealt frankly with this fact of experience and told his followers that the great need above all needs is to see and know God; and this he promised to the pure in heart. It is not a matter of vast learning or of rare religious genius or of unusual opportunities. The conditions are open to all alike. The pure-hearted shall see God and know reality, and this reality, the kingdom of heaven, he called it, is within us. Touching this there is a vast total of evidence and testimony of a kind we are bound to respect. From every age and clime they come telling of peace within and widening horizons of a more abundant life. Prophets and priests and kings are speaking, peasants and pilgrims and toilers through the night are agreeing that they have, each in his own measure, attained unto an ultimate something that speaks to their condition with a satisfaction about which their halting speech reminds us of a childhood language,

lost through the years and heard again imperfectly on return to the homeland.

Not all seeking has equal moral value. There are "seekers" who merely want to be happy, to get a thrill, which may be quite another matter from being like Christ. To receive of his fullness, grace for grace, to walk in his ways and enter his fellowship of service tests our best moral fiber. If we check up by Christ himself as we go along in our search, we shall find our way through to conscious relations with God.

Before setting out for the land of promise there are a few preliminary essentials worth considering. To neglect them may mean to struggle along in waste of one's energies with needless baggage.

Certainly, there is no getting into the highway of holiness without a *clear conscience* as a first entrance condition. Unless one is on friendly terms with the best that he knows, the quest is hopeless from the start. Ethical compromises account for much back-tracking and false-fronting. Many a "doubt" and dodge in the zigzag search for truth are due primarily to a bad moral twist somewhere in a man's life.

Wholesome human contacts go far toward holding us steady in the way. Friendships that quicken the spirit and comfort the heart and interpret life in terms of human values—who can

do without them! Happy the man who is blessed in his friends; but since each has to make up his own list, we have no one but ourselves to blame if we fail here. Did ever a real recluse attain a normal measure of life?

The *daily work* may not at first thought suggest spiritual values, but a work that fits one's personality goes far toward supplying a sound basis for healthy contacts with life. A calling rather than a task is cause for daily thanksgiving.

And, shall I say it? A little of that delicate and delicious sense of proportion that we call humor may be as useful to normal people as some kinds of prayer meetings. Yes, it may! Good, wholesome recreation that stirs the circulation, breaks for the hour the sense of grim responsibility and sends one back to his work better able for the load and less apt to fall into that morbidness that at times besets serious souls; this too has its place and use.

In these days we are in small danger of becoming too solemn. I have been hearing for years of the dangers of long-faced religion and of the evils of kill-joy puritanism, but at present writing I have to confess that I do not know the post-office address of any of it. We are more apt to miss the big things through excess of frivolity than because of our oversolemnity, but a little

wholesome sense of humor has a place of value in the total scheme of things.

Coming closer to the main issue, it is essential that above all things, we *keep on good terms with God.* This is not the same as having a good conscience. Some very conscientious people have been afraid of God and have worked along, literally in the "fear" of the Lord without any definite sense of that warm, personal presence in their lives that Jesus knew so well and promised to his followers. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." When a man in good conscience comes to be wholly unafraid of God and learns the secret of living fellowship with the Father, he has gone far toward solving the problems of substitutes for reality. They no longer interest him.

Here we are on solid ground. There is a finding and keeping of a friendly understanding with the Unseen Presence. Jesus knew it and taught it and multitudes have attested its values in experience. Someone remarked to a little girl that if she wanted a new doll, she would have to get on the good side of her father. "I just guess I am on his good side now," she exclaimed.

They are confused and shy and lonely, these restless and foolish people who try to find in things and thrills and illusions the realities of life and they need first of all a little friendly

understanding of what is the matter with them. To know that somebody knows and cares helps in the quest for a more complete self-realization.

Probably no man ever received ready-made spiritual qualities, apart from the actualities of life's unfolding experiences, growing out of the soul's answer to God. If we have missed the way, looking for emotional quivers, or fascinating theories to adopt or accumulation of things to plague us, we may turn back with confidence to Christ and follow him humbly into the secret of all things. There is a more effective way of opening our prison doors and emerging into that good universe of love and light and fellowship that is ours if we can find the key and learn how to use it in the locks that confine us.

The secret of finding is at last wholly personal. "Come unto *Me*," said Jesus, "and I will give you rest." Men have wasted years seeking abstractions, goodness, patience, power, vision. Eastern mystics have sought by long pilgrimages and tormenting disciplines to enter into satisfactions of spirit, but by their own testimony the results have been meager. "No, I have not yet found," confessed one of them, after forty years of search.

Paul knew a better way. He too was a seeker, a hard-headed one, and there came a day when he found the secret of fullness of life. His let-

ters run over with his overwhelming consciousness of vivid personal relations with a reality that he called Christ. He did not use the abstractions of the mystics, and he knew nothing of the terminology of the modern psychologist. He knew a better Way, a greater Name. Life for Paul was Christ in whom he had believed and in whom he found his satisfying portion. What he found was Christ, the Door, the Way, the Truth, the Life.

III

LISTENING IN

JUST here may be a good time to deal with a practical matter that has troubled us all. We are exhorted to ask, seek, knock, pray, meditate on God, and the moment we try to do so, the world, the flesh, the devil and all else besides rush in and our thoughts are anywhere except on things of the Spirit. How are we to hear anything but the roaring in our own ears when we try to listen to the voice of God?

The now-known voices of the material air supply a helpful symbol for spirit ears. We are dealing with a universe out of sight, the language of which we do not quite "get." Our five senses carry us up to a dividing line and stop. Here something else takes up the refrain and our hearts go on to tell us of a city without foundations, whose builder and maker is God, the same God, to be sure, whose handiwork we see all about us here and now. This initial fact ought to help us to feel at home with him.

In spite of the intrusions of our "wandering thoughts" in our hours of spiritual listening, certain things do come through to us, and on

these we base our faith. We seize them eagerly and listen for them again among the intruding voices that disturb us. In this we are on the right track, for the first step in the pathway of approach to God is that of repeated and better tuning in of our spiritual receivers. If we do not at first succeed in fixing our attention, no matter, everybody has the same difficulty; keep at it and presently the air will clear and we shall hear something.

Out of this infrequent sense of reality, which is not absent from any of us, comes our first great spiritual realization. We know that we are not alone in the universe. Someone is speaking on the air. Someone is near us. Our hearts burn within us as we recognize the existence and Presence of a Heart, something like our own but infinitely vaster. Space is radiant with Being, with Personality, and we are not cut off from personal relations with Him with whom we have to do. There are high barriers between us, to be sure, yet to be done away, but the voices do come through from beyond and find an echo in our hearts, and we are glad. If there were no more to be found for the seeking than this, yet are we fortunate indeed.

Someone is sending across the spaces, which is but another way of saying that a Voice is speaking within us. In any case, we are driven

to believe that our difficulty is not with the sending but with our own faulty receivers. We accept now as commonplace the multitude of voices that crowd about us on the ether, or whatever it is that carries the wave-lengths of the radio world, and we complacently run up our own wires and tune in our receivers. Are we to think it strange that voices, influences, energies should come to us from the unseen universe about us and that they should speak to us, we know not yet what marvelous secrets of spiritual life and power?

In short, what are these wandering thoughts we all know too well, but the interference of our own little buzzing minds on the voice of the Spirit that speaks to us all the while, if we will listen? And the remedy? Largely more accurate and frequent tuning-in. It takes practice, and practice does do wonders in cutting out interference.

We do not all get the same results. Some report high overtones and heavenly harmonies beyond the reach of our own little "sets." Perhaps they are the spiritual geniuses. If we can get nothing at all at first, we can remember that God is speaking to us in the universal language of the surf, the storm, the glory of the sky, the energy of growing plants, the beauty of the earth about us, the cause and effect of the moral order

of creation; these—all these—are the voice of God for us. Sometimes we get a little of it, but most of it goes by us, drowned out by the static of our own clamoring natures. The morning stars are in tune, our own consciences are throwing discord into the symphony.

How to improve our reception is the problem. "We are weakest on our spiritual side," said a great merchant one day, speaking of the small results of a religious effort in his town. So we are; we run down and fade out when the voices grow dim and jarring notes break in.

There is nothing strange in this difficulty in receiving the voice of the Spirit. There are people who have perfect physical vision but are mentally color blind. Ask them to look at a sunset and they talk about baseball. Suggest some of the values of art, literature, music, and they ask how much it will bring in the market. Philosophy, ethics, friendship are rated at commercial values by some people. There are men to whom the comfort of a good conscience is as meaningless as a Yokohama message to a boy with a crystal set.

We accept, then, forthwith, our limits and make the best of them. Of course we do not hear well and slide off into our daily affairs. What of it? Nothing of it except the need of more diligence and frequent practice and a little attention to

the rules and conditions of favorable reception. That we can hear anything at all at any time at all, is reason for great encouragement. We are not freaks of nature, but akin to all men everywhere. We do get signals. The savage, too, bowed before his image of wood or stone, may be getting something through from the unknown. If he receives but little and that little crude in content, his receiver is much like mine, a crude affair. Something is there and he gets a little of it, and I ought to be able to get more. The language of the spheres and of the city of God is not English, it is the universal speech of consciousness and faithful practice does wonders in increasing our reception.

Too much radio analogy may lead us astray in thinking of what constitutes spiritual receptivity. The mystics have given much good counsel on this matter of training the spirit's ear to hear which need not be repeated in detail here. It all comes to a simple matter in the end. If we want to hear God speak to us, and will listen closely and often and long enough at a time, we shall surely hear. Once-a-week listening, when-I-feel-like-it efforts, bring us next to nothing. There are too many other things to keep the attention busy. If we want to hear, and want to intensely enough, we may know the voice of God. To this there are no exceptions.

Listeners do not always agree in their reports of what they get when they tune in. Some hear whispers of angel choruses, broken sentences, strange figures, phrases not always clearly comprehended, fragments of music that tantalize because the tune cannot be finished, echoes of footfalls and rhythm of marching hosts, much talk of "glory" and "blessing," and in the past of "openings" and leadings and visions and voices. For ourselves, we speak of spiritual consciousness more modestly as fragments of a language strange yet familiar if we only knew the alphabet better. The truth is that we have no terms with which to describe what we hear and when we try to tell it, the result is uncertain. We have no way to describe human love at its best. One cannot hear a sunset, nor see a symphony, nor describe spiritual contacts with Reality. That not many of these experiences come to us need not trouble us greatly. Not many are needed to attest the reality and validity of the world unseen, our "ain countrie." That we cannot tune in on heaven at any chance moment of the day need not rob us of our inheritance. Even the experts have attained only occasional complete contacts on their infrequent mounts of transfiguration. They too had their times of depression and black despair, and they present to us nothing that the normal child of the King

need envy. The steady, regular travelers on the way to God, on the whole, have the best of it. One clear burst of glory may shed its radiance down the passing years. No one can live on a daily diet of ecstasy; what we need is one or two good samples of the things yet to be revealed. For the rest, a daily walk with God is really within the reach of us all, if we take the pains to learn the conditions and pay the price.

Two things stand clear from all this. We can make occasional close contacts with the realm of spiritual consciousness, and we can steadily increase our spiritual receptivity, however weak it may be at the start. Once sure of these, with glad confidence we set out on our quest of the land that is fairer than day, and just at hand. Now we know of a certainty that we are not shipwrecked mariners, stranded on a whirling sphere in the universe; we are citizens of a heavenly country, children of a heavenly King, and as we journey homeward, well may we toil and serve and sing.

We improve our reception mainly by paying attention to it. Read the most helpful books, listen to and talk with the men and women who seem to have a meaning and message for us, practice daily tuning in, keep forever at the elimination of whatever interferes with our reception. Follow the radio rules of the spirit and you will

get results. God is on the air, all the time. If we check up on the actual time and effort made each day to get in touch with God, most of us will be astonished and ashamed to find how infinitesimal is the time we give to God. Sixteen hours to the day's business and pleasure, three minutes to God!

This is the confidence we have. Everything that comes in on my receiver and speaks to my innermost spirit was sent from somewhere. It did not blow in the window from nowhere. The Voice comes from Headquarters and it speaks of a loving Will and Intelligent Purpose. Someone out there is taking a loving interest in me. I know that I am dealing with Reality, not illusion, partly because I know I know, and partly because my results check with those of other and better men than I, and partly because what I hear with the inner ear has close likeness to the mind of Christ. I have reason to believe that this same Infinite Goodness falls in some sense short of its final expression until it reaches my little receiver and is transmitted into conscious experience in my own life. I too am a part of that "filling up that which is behind" in the incarnation of God for the declaration of his divine purpose. Small and insignificant as I am, I have my part to play in his great intention, something to realize and express that God chooses to put

forth in and through me and me alone! Verily, who am I that he should thus speak to me?

We may perfect our ways of following after, as the ages go by, but the main principles are forever unchanged. "Speak, Lord, and thy servant heareth!" When someone begins to talk about setting aside the "outworn methods" of prayer and communion and daily devotions in favor of some new and startling methods of reception of mysteries and marvels revealed through "the occult," then we know that we are off the track. What we need is not some new device for getting some other station; we need to perfect our own receivers and hear more perfectly the good word of life that is calling from the great deeps of God to the depths within our own spirits.

IV

THE UNSEEN FACTOR

With all respect to our social natures, God-given and worthy, there are times when we need to be alone, if we are to realize those resources of peace and comfort and outlook and uplift that come to us after the tumult and the shouting die.

A forest may be a good listening post. A small boy wandered off into a wood at sunset and under a great oak felt a Presence and knew an identity with the universe, little understood then or since, but frequently experienced. Over and over comes the sense of a Presence in the gathering dusk, in the silences of a sand-swept desert, in the dense verdure of a tropical jungle, under the blazing stars of a southern sky.

This losing oneself in the universe is worth a trial, many trials. Go away from everybody, into the desert, or a forest, or a mountainside if possible. Forget the fever and fret and conventions and controversies. Trees are great prophets. Sturdy and clean and strong they stand, veterans of life's struggle with the elements. They ought to know something worth while. Look until the world of restless-minded men fades and

a Something Different speaks of truth and peace and reality. Sit quietly and listen till something speaks, as it surely will.

I wait and listen and a definite impression forms within. It is the silent Voice that calls and the heart answers. There is now here a Presence that is neither hill nor tree nor rock nor earth nor sky, and it is saying something. Listen! These solid things about me did not just happen, nor did I. Someone is within and back of all, a cosmic consciousness is upon me and I tune in as best I can and listen.

I am aware now that another universe is close at hand. It vibrates in a different mode and key from the world of doctrines, definitions, and rules that at times have filled my thoughts. This new something is akin to a reality I never knew on the old basis. Faintly at first, then more clearly come the signals. If I can silence my own interfering thoughts now, I may hear something to my advantage.

I do hear something—an impression that is old in theory, but new to my present mood: that He who is in and above all this world about me must be at least as great as his creation and that doubtless he is far greater. Likewise he must be infinitely greater than little me, and I am great enough to sense all this and see the trace of a divine hand about me.

There is nothing like the forest, or the mountain or the stars to expose the blind futility of competition and force and tinkering with ecclesiastical machinery, the illusions of power and place, the emptiness of scheming for effects. When this fades there stands forth a Reality that is self-evidencing and needs neither proclaiming nor defending. I lose interest in systems and methods. If, out of his own contacts with reality, any man has anything to say to me, gladly will I listen.

Can a man really venture out alone with God? Leave behind, if only for the hour, all that he has received from experience, testimony, and tradition? Hardly a total program of approach to truth, of course, but worth a trial for an hour, a day, a month. This is real adventure of spirit, without comforts of certified dogma or attested interpretation. Doubtless I shall find in the end only what multitudes have found before me, but I shall find it for myself, which is the only finding that brings possession. For me all things would be new and fresh. I listen to the Voice, I follow the light and test all things by their power to speak to my consciousness, and for the moment know only what I may know directly and inwardly. Nothing will I take from without, so to blaze anew the soul's path to God. I have known about him long enough. It is time that I

see him face to face, so far as this veil may permit. Here is real adventure, the high expedition of the spirit through earth's confusion; and, journeying thus, what do I find?

In the forest I find a Presence, not lurking behind a rock or living in a tree, as the animists have supposed, but a Presence pervading and personal; vastly beyond my present range, to be sure, but nevertheless recognizable, so far as my little ear-phones can distinguish the great *I Am* that Moses heard one day on the hillside in Midian. It was probably a good day for receiving. For me one thing is certain: I am not alone and there is a friendly tone about the signals. There is nothing to bring me doubt or fear. In a way I too can approach and deal with the Unseen. Doubtless this is all colored and concreted by previous experiences, but nevertheless it is vivid and the reality of it grips me close. I begin to feel that I know and that I know that I know, whether or not I can tell just what it is that I know. In certainty there is strength.

I know a Presence, but I also know something else that brings a shadow. As I listen and muse there comes a sense of unworthiness, an uneasy reminder that I too am on holy ground and am not worthy. With clearer perception of all this loveliness about me comes increasing knowledge of my own baseness. It is the voice of the years

and it does not grow dim. I try to ignore it, but I know well enough that I am not fit to enter the Holy of holies. If in the rush of life's affairs I had forgotten it, I know it now out here under these good trees.

But as I listen on, I begin to know that in spite of my baseness, there is an inner kinship between this Spirit and my own unworthy heart, else how could I know this Presence or hear his whispered call? It is a heartening message that comes out of the unseen. If God made the world thus good, why should he forget me? Unworthy though I am, there is something in me that is not in the trees and God seems to place a value on that something that hears him speak. Make all allowance for nature's tooth and claw, it is still a good world, a better world than any that men have made. Nature's survivals are of innocent necessity as contrasted with the fiendish cruelties of the Tower and the Inquisition. Before we begin to find fault with God's world better take heed to the one we have mis-made in our own image. My helplessness when first I came into this world was met by abundant preparations wrought by loving hearts and helpful hands, and I believe that when I reach the other shore there will be mansions prepared to receive me there, which will be quite good enough for me.

There are people so unfortunate as to have no

forests near to use as listening stations. They deserve our sympathy. But God Almighty is not limited to wooded slopes for temples or to high trees for spiritual antennæ. Some of the closest contacts with unseen Reality have been made in bare cells and crowded trains, amid rushing multitudes and beneath dark clouds of blinding grief. It is not a matter of location but of adaptation. God can speak to us anywhere, if he can get our attention long enough. There is in London a receiving house of a great importing firm, where at times ten checking clerks are shouting lists and figures to ten receiving men, and without confusion. They all shout at once, but each in his different key and tone and there are no mistakes.

A brilliant modern essayist boasted of his spiritual bolshevism to all the world, only to find at last that he was merely hopelessly orthodox and had not known it. There is a classic story of the Englishman who set forth in his private yacht and at length discovered, one foggy morning, an unknown island. He went ashore and took prompt possession in the name of the King. Later on the fog lifted and he recognized the shores of his own right little, tight little England. All these new discoveries of the intrepid spirit, these voices of the forest and sea and sky and the starry night, when more clearly heard

are apt to identify themselves with the same messages of peace and power and consolation that have come to sensitive souls in all times and places, since time began. But it is a great experience to discover them anew for ourselves and to tread with our own unshod feet the royal highway that leads to a new consciousness of God. Once more we enter upon our high inheritance as saints on the earth and pilgrims toward the infinite. The cure for our restlessness is his eternal rest.

V

VOICES OF THE SANCTUARY

THE open air is not the only good listening-in station for restless people in search of reality. There are voices of solitude and there is a speech that we hear when the multitude keeps holy day. More people by far have found God in church than in the forest. The processes may differ, but we become conscious of the same Voice and Presence in the temple that we found on the mountainside.

People everywhere get together when they want to do something in a large way. Politics, business, education, recreation, industry, defense, adventure all involve collective effort. It would be strange if religion alone left us solitary. Otherwise every man might find his own God in his own garden or go off into the country and have his own church all to himself, free seats and no ushers, every man his own prophet, priest and collection plate.

This idea of substituting the wood lot for the church has, for most people, one fatal defect. There will always be a few who will find God in the open, but the rest of us, as a general thing,

will turn it into a Sunday picnic. Any of us may meet such an experience at rare intervals, but taken week in and week out we soon go stale and hunt up new places. Over and over again it has been proven in experience that men who stop going to church soon cease to find God anywhere else, while those who find him frequently among his people will meet him everywhere. For this there must be a reason.

We are so constituted that we have to do most of the bigger and better things of life together, whence the social side of public worship. Freaks, geniuses, hermits, and devotees may work on alone, but even these would do better if they took frequent counsel of their fellow men. No normal man can go away by himself and enjoy a good laugh or an hour of hearty play alone, nor can he do his best work of any kind if long isolated from other people. When we cut ourselves loose from the wheel of human relations, we go off on tangents. Solitude has its high place, but always in contrast with and relief from the intimate fellowships of normal living. Any human mind, too long on a tangent, goes off into de-socialized space and loses the centralizing focus of human relations. Changing the figure, the hermit goes stale and needs fertilizing contacts with other minds. In reaction to the quickening stimuli of talk and banter and

rivalry and fellowship, we unconsciously shift our mental gears and run in higher speeds. Great leaders of men often charge their batteries in solitude, but they make their working contacts in company with their fellows. Many a leader has learned the method of thinking matters over alone, then calling in his associates and listening to what each had to say before forming his final program. How many state addresses have been the composite work of many minds the uninitiated cannot know, but no man could generate all the wisdom of a four-years' set of Presidential state papers.

All of this holds good in the realm of spirit. There is a restlessness that comes out of emptiness, of batteries run down, of having given out until there is nothing left, either to give or to feed one's own soul. Here the public worship service comes in with a high regenerative value for the exhausted spirit. The more receivers, the better the hearing. If we have difficulty in focusing our attention alone in the open, we have substantial help in the service of the sanctuary. It is easier to stick to the subject when scores and hundreds are doing the same thing, especially when the service itself serves to focus attention and direct thinking toward the good we seek. We need not go into the matter of social suggestion, but it is common experience that

there does come a strengthening of morale when we meet with a number of other people, like-minded and sincere seekers after God.

There is a simple, mechanical value in the established hour and stated order of procedure. Spiritual exercises left to every man's caprice and convenience are forgotten by most of us. This happens in Confucian and Buddhist temples where everyone comes and goes at will, self-serve plan. Many never come at all, except when in trouble. In private and in public devotion, definite times have a practical value of no mean order.

My first definite impression of a church was that of a country chapel with a high Gothic window behind the pulpit. The colored glass threw a sort of glory on the minister's head. The sermons are long since forgotten, but the Gothic motive and the mystery of ecclesiastical color are vivid to-day. Later on came a church with stated services in which a boy sat in the family pew who remembers not the sermons, but the quiet and dignity of the hour. Which is to say that architecture and æsthetics have something to do with the preparation of the mind for worship. The ritualistic churches, in contrast with barren meeting houses, so hollow and empty when no one is in them, are usually rich in this suggestiveness.

Our superemphasis on the sermon loses a certain permanency of result which is claimed for a super-ritualistic performance in the presence of a passive congregation. No one who attends sympathetically a Roman Catholic mass can soon forget its vivid impression of a real Presence, material to be sure, but unescapable. And who among us has ever made friends with a great cathedral without carrying on through life a permanent something that forever makes him a better man? There is a church in the old walled city of Manila into which I often went to look and listen and cultivate an acquaintance with the building. It was crude in some details and bizarre in others, but it was pure Gothic, and its vaulted ceiling, pointed arches, colored glass, noble pillars and long shadows spoke a language of devotion. Again and again I would sit down and wait for what the building had to say to me. It was somehow good for what was the matter with me, little me, rushing about, trying to hustle the East. That is the difference between a temple and a meetinghouse. You can go to a temple, a real one, any hour of the day or night and it is never empty, even when not a human soul is present. At least the spirit of the sanctuary is there.

"Now, this is all very well for æsthetics, but has little to do with religion." Wait a moment!

Spiritual receptivity depends on mental states more than we sometimes suspect, and suggestive surroundings are substantial helps in producing favorable states of mind. Try it! If your heart is cold, your receptivity poor, and your interference exasperating, go to church, sit quietly and let the whole service say to you what it will. If the sermon is good, so much the better. If it does not interest you, listen to God. With so many others about you doing likewise, it will be easier to get the Station than when you are off by your lonely self.

This reverent Presence of the sanctuary will speak to our little individual needs if we listen as best we can. There is no reverence in a chattering crowd on a busy street, but there may be the finest kind of reverence in the congregation that keeps silence before Him. There is not much reverence in our homes, and if there were, we are not there enough to get its benefits. There may be a certain solemnity in the forest or under the stars, but there is a social factor in reverence that finds its best expression in a church where we may be quiet awhile and listen to a Something greater, better, nobler than ourselves. This may humiliate our pride, to be sure, but it is good for us to feel a sense of respect for the greater than we. We need to know how to treat our moral betters in the universe.

We find in the meetingplace the same Presence we met on the mountainside, but with a difference, the difference that comes from the impact of other sensitive minds on our own, interpreting our experiences and expressing our aspirations in terms of vocal prayer and praise. Not that this Presence dwells in the sanctuary in any sacramentarian sense, nor in any sense at all except in the hearts of those who come and bring it with them. It is a pragmatic fact that when worshipful people assemble and open their minds under the influence of quiet and chant and hymn and prayer and sermon, there arises a collective spiritual consciousness of high value. The effect of the temple, in radio language, is on our personal receiving set, not on God, and a valuable effect it is.

There is the voice of peace. It is worth something to visit with regularity a place where we may leave the fever and fret of life outside the door and come in quietly and listen a while. We have been so busy with our social work and goals and rallies and quotas and competitions and enthusiasms and hurrahs—all good enough in their places—that we have nearly lost the cure for nerves found in the soothing presence of the sanctuary. Better begin, rather than end, our services with the benediction, "The *peace* of God, that passeth all understanding, keep your hearts

and minds . . ." Is there anything that we need more?

A distinct apprehension of a new set of moral values comes from our meeting in the sanctuary. When we bow our heads and open our hearts together, some things that we thought quite important shrink into third place and some other things that we had supposed almost forgotten, come out of hiding and slip into the first line of interests.

Since we are what we are, we need what helps us, and in practice we do tune in better on spiritual things in the presence of a social rhythm that catches us up and carries us along to common ends. We sing and pray and respond and stand and sit together, and the very physical acts bring us closer together in spirit. If we are unable to get into step with our fellow men in such a service, how are we to attain the rhythm of things divine? If we are better friends and citizens for this getting together with a common purpose, how much more shall we be better followers of Him who promises to meet with us when we come together in his name!

Churchgoing does produce results, great and valuable—the final test of working value. Vast is the total moral force released through religious public assemblies. Multitudes have found there new life and hope and courage and the cure

for that uneasiness that gnaws at the heart of life like a canker. Paul knew what he was about when he exhorted his converts not to forsake the assembling of themselves together for worship and prayer and praise. He knew full well that without the social reenforcement of such a service, they would never outlive the storms through which they had to pass. It was true then and now and always will be that

> "There is a place where Jesus sheds
> The oil of gladness on our heads."

VI

THE ZONE OF MYSTERY

It is a fact of experience that listening in on the eternal verities is not always so simple a matter as an hour in the forest or in sitting still in church might lead us to suppose. Questions rise to confront and confound us and there are puzzling decisions to be made. When we approach the unseen we cannot go very far in any direction without coming to a wall of difficulty and a cloud of mystery. Both have their place in the soul's search for reality.

There are few more dramatic pictures in history than that of an old man standing on a mountaintop, shading his dim eyes as he wistfully gazes across a river on a fair land of promise toward which for forty years he had led a perverse and wandering people. He had all along hoped to culminate his career with a triumphal entry at the head of the marching hosts and leave them at last to found a great and unique civilization. Now he is cut off to die alone on the mountain while others take up his burden and reap the fruits of his long years of hardship and responsibility.

Is that fair? Who has not asked the question? For there are Moseses and their Nebos everywhere and a factor of mystery and inequality in every life. We look for explanations, but they never quite satisfy us. The tragedies of history stand out along the highway of human experience: Esau cheated of his inheritance by a trick, David denied the building of the Temple, Elijah at Carmel, Jonah under his gourd, martyrs at their stakes, Jesus on the cross, saints and scientists and benefactors losing out while crooks and politicians sit in the seats of the scornful and rule the world. What are all these but high cases of the unmerited tragedy and unexplainable mystery that creep up upon us all! And how are we to face this riddle?

In facing facts and not theories we have to admit that in this world there is no final and complete adjustment of the ethical inequalities of life. We are driven back to a final reference to the life to come, where the crooked shall be made straight. "If in this life only," said Paul, "we have hope in Christ, then of all men are we most miserable." Most miserable because most deceived and because bereft of any final and fair adjustment of the ethical riddle of human life. We are trading our chances here for an equalization there, and if there is nothing beyond, we lose out both ways.

It is useless to try to persuade ourselves or others that the righteous always get the best of it. They do not. Evildoers sometimes climb over the heads of the best people we know, and they are not always careful where they plant their feet. Dishonesty and trickery at times deceive the best of us. There are men who defy every principle of decency and good morals and prosper. Many of us at some time barely miss some merited promotion while some other and less worthy man goes in by a toss. We never quite penetrate the cloud that hangs over our highest summits of possibility and we never fully understand the mystery and tragedy that peep out at us from just over the horizon. Joyce Kilmer slain in battle, Alan Seeger dead on the field, fathers and mothers cut off just when most needed, young men forced to leave school to support relatives—it is easy enough to multiply cases.

We look for some basis for faith in eternal justice. To give ourselves over to distress, despair, or to assume the pagan virtue of stoical endurance is not a Christian answer to the problem.

There is not so much confusion as at first appears. True, there is no final accounting here and now, but there are some broad and strong principles that run through the ages and weave

together our strained experiences. If we knew all the facts in the case, the factor of inequality might be much further reduced. What of Moses, shut out because he struck the rock in the dusty desert? Is that fair? Not on this incomplete statement of the case, but wait a moment. Moses met one of the strongest temptations, a temptation that confronts all great leaders of human enterprises. He wanted to do it all himself. To speak the word of power, to see the elements obey, to be credited with a miracle, to know his authority enhanced by solving a critical issue and doing it himself! Was not all this that whereunto he had been set for a leader in Israel? "The business of a leader is to lead, isn't it?" exclaimed a devoted missionary when remonstrated with for his too-strong hand in dealing with his associates. The sweeping blow and the gushing stream would certainly not diminish the popularity of Moses. He was meek, but he was human.

What was wrong with that? Simply the effect on the man himself and the twisting of his whole attitude toward life. Such a man gets into a tight place, prays for help, and when it comes, rises up and complacently says, "I managed that pretty well now, didn't I?" And the punishment? In some way it happens that he who falls into this snare never quite reaches his high-

est possibility, just misses the promised land reserved for the humble-hearted and unpresuming. The business of a leader is not primarily to lead, but to get his associates to feel that they too have a share in an enterprise that first and last must be co-operative. Likewise, presumption automatically eliminates the sympathy of others, shuts a man in upon himself, shortens his range, narrows his vision, reduces his margin, cripples his march, and shuts in his face the door to the promised land.

So much for Moses and his mystery. Our own mysteries are apt to have a concealed factor which, if revealed, sets the case in a new light and clears up some of the supposed inequality. The more we know, the less we marvel. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." There is more on ahead than we can possibly see now, and our conscious ignorance may at least increase our modesty of judgment.

It is just this unknown possibility ahead of us, promising more complete understanding, that makes death to be the greatest adventure in the universe. The zone of mystery that troubles us now becomes our margin of contact with the universe unseen. There are few who do not know a consciousness of something great and good out there, awaiting our possession. Are our presumptions, our desire to do it all ourselves and

get the credit, to cut us off at last from our larger inheritance?

Better, then, to face this factor of the unknown and take it as our channel out to sea. Mystery means something more than that we do not know what may happen. The "X" in our equation may be resolved into something better than we have yet imagined. Mere conjecture? Yes, and no. Our uncertainties often yield rich harvests of unexpected benefits in this present life. How much more, then, under the better conditions of the realm beyond our present ken! Our best contacts with reality come through this zone of mystery where we let go our hard facts and uncertainties and lose ourselves a little in the verities of the unseen. Those regions just beyond our range of vision vibrate with energies that may work with us and for us if we make effective contacts with the reality our hungry hearts are seeking.

Thank God, there is an unknown margin, and through it come the voices that speak to us of infinite life. It does make a difference whether we call it blind chance or Infinite Wisdom. Jesus faced this whole realm of uncertainties and compared it to the currents of the air, about which we know so little, though we can be sure of their existence and energies. In the midst of all perplexities He said that there was one thing on

which we might depend. Within it all is a God whom he taught us to call, "Our Father," and who so loved the world and us that he gave his only begotten Son for our redemption. When the disciples hesitated before so vast a thesis, Jesus said that they were not to be troubled by the mystery of it, but were to come into his presence, asking, seeking, knocking, full knowing that they would be kindly and fairly dealt with. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"

How much more? As much more as God is more loving and just and wise than earthly parents can ever hope to become. That changes the whole situation and makes us to know that we are not dealing with blank mystery or impersonal force but with a loving Will that takes an interest in us and consciously works for our good. If we admit that we cannot know what may be our highest good, we are thrown back upon this same God, waiting and watching within the shadow, who works with his own earth-children, pluckily pushing their way through the maze of life's uneven highway.

VII

WHOLESOME HOLINESS

CAME one day a letter from a minister. They were making it hard for him: criticisms, objections, opposition. He couldn't imagine why, unless it were their antagonism to his ideas of Christian Holiness. I knew the man and his disposition and had to reply that it was not his holiness but his bad temper that was making trouble. His periodic outbursts of denunciation scorched everybody within reach, and there were few who cared to incur a second blessing of the sort. He called it, "being frank" and scorned his more reserved brethren for "saying one thing and thinking another." No such hypocrisy in him!

It was Thomas Carlyle's mother-in-law who remarked that, "Thamas was a vurra smart mon, was Thamas, but he was nae guid to live wi'." Of course he had a bad stomach, did Thomas—everybody knew that—but if he had taken better care of his digestion and acted more like a gentleman at home, it would have been better for all concerned, including Jean.

Just what and why is a crank? Why should

anybody continually get static over his mental receiver, and turn it loose with a superspeaker on all the family? There are several definitions. A crank is usually a man of one idea, who having acquired that much, shuts his mind like a trap and all the king's horses and men cannot get him to open up and take in another or release the one he has. Everybody else is wrong, has to be, to supply the contrasting background for the everlasting rightness of the crank. Noah was hardly a crank, but he must have gotten a good deal of human comfort out of the fact that for once he alone of all men was right about it. He had stood their jeering all the while he was building the ark, and Noah was human, very.

A distinguishing mark of the fanatic is his closed mind to new evidence. Why listen to other ideas when he already has the best there are? He is the man who "does what the Almighty would do if he knew all the facts in the case." How could you tell anything to a man like that? The less he knows, the more sure he is of it.

It would not be so bad if the crank would go his way in peace, allowing other people equal privilege and permitting those who prefer to do so to keep their minds open, prove all things, and hold fast that which is good. But the

crank lives in opposition, which makes him vociferous, like the channel buoy that sounds the loudest when the waves toss it about. To assure himself he must be continually talking about it.

What has all this to do with holiness? Nothing, in point of fact, but the terms have sometimes been confused, one running under the name of the other. There is a real problem here, not a play upon words. How am I to be intense without becoming narrow? How be zealous and not become a bigot? What is the essential difference between faith and fanaticism?

"If you wish to discuss with me," said Voltaire, "first define your terms." Very good. What, then, is holiness—that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord and that has some relation to the ultimate verities of experience? Dealing with experience rather than theology, we have to admit that historically, the sailing has not always been smooth over these seas of sanctification, but we can at least begin negatively with the idea that a holy life, a good life, would imply the elimination of conscious and intentional wrongdoing from our thoughts and acts. So far, so good.

But pumping things out of life only causes other things to rush in, and it was long ago dis-

covered that the only effective cure for a moral vacuum lay in overcoming evil with good. Wholeness, as we have so often been reminded, is the only cure for shallowness, emptiness, and close-mindedness. To keep out the weeds, grow a useful crop in their place. Paul had the idea and made a market garden the striking symbol of a positive life. He made a list of the fruits of the Spirit, and an attractive display they are. It needs little imagination to see the great apostle going about in his garden of graces, basket on arm, gathering a day's provisions of these good fruits; love, joy, peace; forbearance, kindness, benevolence; good-faith, meekness, self-restraint. When these "things be in you and abound," no one with a normal appetite goes hungry or falls into difficulties with his friends over having too much of them. The faithful cultivation of this garden will end wandering about in strange markets, looking for high-flavored and strange-tasting fruits. There are some people, of course, who are forever hunting chile-peppers and allspice.

No man dealing in Paul's market and living on his garden can be a crank. "Peace, forbearance, self-restraint!" I should say not. "Love, joy, benevolence!"—no trace of the closed mind or censorious spirit here. An old fellow who

prided himself on being a "just man," when subjected to analysis, assayed ninety percent insistence on getting all that was coming to him. Being a persistent man, he usually got it, but whether he knew anything about love, joy, and peace his neighbors doubted.

Too much introspection is debilitating—that we all know; but once in a while it is good to take an inventory and check over the situation. If your pastor is preaching uninteresting sermons, if the choir is poor, if you are not getting much out of your religion and are beginning to think of some other church or some new teaching that has come to town, look over your own personal garden of the heart and see how many of the fruits of the Spirit are producing a satisfactory crop. What you need is probably not thrill-producing sermons, or some new cult, but plain, wholesome love, joy, peace. With enough of these in the heart, life would be good, regardless of the sermons and anthems. "Forbearance, kindness, benevolence" are not so easy; such crops do not grow without cultivation of the soil. Listening to eloquent preaching does not in itself produce forbearance and self-restraint; poor preaching will do it far better. "Good faith, meekness," are not so easy either, but wonderfully popular in the market. If any man has in his life a good crop of

these graces, no one will persecute him because of his holiness.

What to do with a crank! Let him alone, perhaps, though that leaves him still at large, telling us how. Sometimes a shock will jog open his mind and a tiny seed will slip in before he can close it again. When the seed begins to grow there will be a breaking out on one side and that will help a little. Anything that pushes back ever so little the horizons of his life will stretch him that much.

There is a story of a troublesome tribe of Indians in the Northwest that did not appreciate good treatment and sometimes set out to shoot up the country. The Indian Agent, being a humane man, hit upon the expedient of taking the Big Chief to Washington to see the President and the Capitol and all things pertaining to a transcontinental trip. It was an illuminating and transforming experience. After measuring the continent twice by the click of the carwheels, the chief called together his people and made an oration. "Here and now we end all this fussing with the white man. I thought that this country began with the Eastern mountains and ended in the Western sea, but now I know better. I flew with the wind six days and nights and came at last to the big Council Tent, as big as a moun-

tain, and there were many such. I have seen more people than the stars of the heavens for number, and they have more horses than the sands of the sea, more guns than the pebbles in the river. Henceforth we shall make friends with the white man and his medicine."

They did. All the Indian needed was a bigger idea of what it was all about. It might be a good idea to take some of the religious cranks on a long journey somewhere. Some of them it would pay to send around the world.

Obviously, what the crank needs is a new attitude toward life, a larger estimate of the value of the things that he does not know or may not approve. Nothing short of a radical change of heart will cure his warped outlook on the universe. But changes of the heart are not prescribed by practitioners nor readily obtained at the corner drug store. Nor are they effected in the operating room under anæsthetics. Besides, major operations are not performed without the consent of the patient, or at least of the members of his family. Doubtless the families of the cranks would gladly consent to any effective method of reform, but the case is not simple. The trouble with the crank is that he prefers to be that way. Wholeness of outlook, open-mindedness of spirit, intellectual hospitality to new evi-

dences are not ordered by mail nor attained in a single effort. Crankiness may cause more restlessness on the part of other people than of the crank himself. And the remedy? There is none other than to shift the center of the ex-centric person back to a point equi-distant from everything else, to carry on the mechanical figure. The trouble with the fanatic is that he is off center.

VIII

PERSONALITY AND DOGMA

A LOT of restlessness has centered about a war of doctrines and clash of doxies. Some of us may be pardoned if we do not register much excitement over this theological tempest, which, when let alone, soon begins to blow itself out. Not that what a man believes is not important. It is, tremendously so, which is why we come back to Jesus and ask leave to place the major emphasis where he did. The things which Jesus ignored cannot be of first importance.

There must be something fundamentally defective about a major approach through dogma to a religion that is, first of all, life and experience. We find equally honest and conscientious men holding conflicting ideas and both claiming to have attained satisfactory contacts with the realm of the spirit. Apparently, spiritual satisfactions and assurances of acceptance with God do not depend primarily on theological agreements.

I remember a dear old man whom we called Uncle John. His specialty was argument about

baptism. I liked him but avoided his arguments until one day he cornered me.

"Why are you not willing to obey the Lord?"

I had to reply. "Uncle John, it comes to this: You were baptized one way and have the inner evidence that you are accepted of God and on the way to the better country. I was baptized by another method, and I have the same evidence. If God accepts us both without distinction because of our baptism, why should we argue about it?"

There is plenty of experimental evidence that favor with God and a satisfactory "witness within" do not depend on the acceptance of some special set of doctrines, selected for us by well-meaning persons willing to relieve us of the trouble of thinking for ourselves. "Believe what you please," exclaimed a controversialist. "As for me, I will follow the Holy Spirit," the presumption being, of course, that he had a monopoly on the mind of the Spirit and knew the final word of interpretation.

Jesus taught no theology and in an age of disputing traditionalists refused to take seriously the doctrinal systems of his time. He did lay down some principles of life, so far-reaching in their bearing on all human values that we are still far short of attaining his measure of under-

standing of life in terms of spiritual realities. It is surprising to note how few were his essentials. Being accused of heresy by an enthusiastic defender of the faith, I asked for a list of things essential to soundness of doctrine. My friend named them in good spirit and as I assented to them, one by one, a puzzled look came over his face. He soon found the trouble and exclaimed, "Oh, yes, that is very well, but you don't mean the same thing by some of these terms that I do."

"Possibly that is true," I admitted, "but suppose we make a list of the things that Jesus said were important and try to discover together just what he meant by them."

My friend was not interested in such inquiry. His own list was closed; henceforth it was a question of battle, not investigation.

What Jesus did was to live the most extraordinary life of all history, declare the nature of God, and set up a theory of human personality that has changed the course of human thinking. Men then and now measure values in terms of property, goods, things. Jesus brushed this standard aside and based all values in human personality. Nothing else had any value worth mentioning. Only people, persons, human beings were of account in the sight of God. So we have

the born-again men with a new character, the Good Samaritan and the Wedding Feast, all strange enough nineteen hundred years ago, and representing value-standards that are not very common yet. He stressed the simplicity of childhood faith, the doing of God's will rather than the repetition of set phrases, the attainment of spiritual vision and purity of motive and Christ-likeness of life, these were the great essentials. As to traditions and doctrines and interpretations, if any man were willing to do his will he would know of the doctrine, the teaching. Spiritual certainty comes of willingness to follow to the end the highest that one can conceive, as presented through Christ.

All this registers in character and conduct rather than in speculation or controversy. Jesus had little interest in saving the truth, but much concern that men should know the truth and be made free thereby. He and his immediate followers threw their lives into proclaiming a message of life and power for those who would receive it. Jesus based his whole program on the output of transformed lives, not on the defense of selected dogma. Theological thinking is important, the clearer the thinking the better; but thinking with Christ does not develop a censorious attitude toward men who think differ-

ently. The wonderful museum in the Vatican contains many paintings of the persecutions through which the early Christians passed, but I did not find any reference to the eighty-two thousand victims who were burned at the stake across the street during the papal persecutions of the mediæval "heretics." If we want to find the spirit of Jesus, we may have to go outside historical Christianity to do it. Insistence on one's own particular list of essentials is the mark of a closed mind. So long as a man is really thinking, he is open to new evidence. Charles Darwin used to say that he made it a rule always to leave a margin for new evidence and room to change his findings if necessary. When a man ceases to think, he is apt to close his mind, lay aside his studies, and begin to defend the faith.

Theological contestants forget that the things of the Spirit are hidden from the wise (in their own conceits) and prudent (in maintaining the *status quo*) and are revealed unto open-minded babes. Polemic is not the method of spiritual discernment. Spirit and life are not matters of scientific analysis but of direct apprehension and conscious experience and are to be weighed and judged by their own standards. The kingdom of God, which Jesus said is within us, is to be revealed, received, realized through voluntary

response to the voice of the Spirit within us and through conscious experience of its saving power. These transforming experiences constitute the dynamic of a new character, not the weapon of a belligerent apologetic.

And character, how attained? Is a man to sit down and check over his weak and strong points and fill in and subtract and file and polish till he is as round as possible? Perhaps, but there is more involved in character value than a mechanical balancing of faults and virtues. Character is a thing of life, and the life has a spontaneous quality that defies mechanics. Life bubbles up and runs over and does the unexpected and sometimes irrational thing. Life follows the expanding and outworking overflow of its own inner energies.

Jesus is divinely dynamic in his contacts with our life, and our personalities do not need polishing so much as awakening, releasing, and inspiring. Jesus left us no set of detailed rules for conduct, with duly balanced praise or blame for each act, like the rules of the monkish orders. He was no character-carpenter, or justice of the peace over men. He said that he came that men might have life and have it more abundantly, he proposed to push back the horizons of men's minds and open the fountains and clear the chan-

nels and kindle the fires and send men out to do the impossible in his name and because his power was upon them.

Such empowered men may not agree exactly in their statements of what they believe or how they think. They cannot be standardized in details without losing the touch of originality, and that way we are headed for Rome with its enforced uniformity and prescribed acceptance of other men's thinking in place of our own. If we must think alike, then Jesus made a mistake in releasing an ideal of personality that made complete uniformity forever impossible. Lest we should not understand it, he lived out to the full his own ideal and invited us to come and see for ourselves. If we look steadfastly on him, we may not all understand his words exactly alike, but we may receive something of his spirit and we can in some measure become like him. We will learn the meaning of that famous and sometimes misunderstood remark of Dean Inge: "Religion is not only to be taught, but must be caught from some one who already has it."

They came to him one day with the old question, what really were the most important things to believe, which was the greatest commandment? He mentioned two and said that those two included everything else; love to God with all one's

being and love to men in equal measure with oneself. No man has yet been able to add a line or subtract a syllable from that finished word. It is one of the few statements that are final. Suppose we were all to accept that and go out and live by it, leaving each other free to follow as closely as possible each in his own way the Light of the World and learn of Him! Verily, all the other things would surely be added unto us!

IX

A PARABLE OF THE MOTOR CAR

If salt and sparrows and grass supplied teaching symbols for the first century the characteristic items of our own daily life may be useful as analogies for our thinking. We live largely on wheels and make more miles a day than our grandfathers did in a week or a month. My grandfather used to load up dressed poultry and pork in the winter time and take a week for the trip to market and back. The distance was sixty miles.

We need not join the gloomy people who tell us that the faster we go the less progress we make, that gasoline is expensive and a good car costs as much as a farm used to be worth, that our ancestors got more living from a two-wheeled cart than we do from six cylinders. So the gloomy say, but we do not see any of them working their way through traffic with a yoke of oxen.

The fact is the difference is worth its cost. There is needless noise and tension, to be sure, but the fathers thought that they too were being hustled along at a dizzy modern pace. We re-

adjust our reactions to changed stimuli and are living longer on the average than our ancestors did in the good old days. There are compensations along the way. We do get a good deal of scenery in spite of the speed. Our readjustments are not so difficult, and few of us refuse to learn to drive a car.

Which has to do with a restlessness which has certainly not decreased with the more abundant supply of things in our lives. Are we to throw away material things or shall we look for ways of making them serve us more effectively? Few of us think that Jesus would refuse to use the effective means of this age. We shall not increase our fullness of life nor assure our peace of mind by sticking to a horse and buggy in the midst of motor-congested streets. Better make the motor serve us more effectively. To the parable, then.

To begin, there is the highway, hardly an emblem of peace in our time. The highway with its modern traffic has radically changed our thinking. Roads have usually been common property, emblems of progress and symbols of the mystery just over the hill. That is why we go in for bigger and faster cars, hoping yet to catch up with the elusive goddess, though, in point of fact, we never do. It is lots of fun to

chase her, especially if the road is good and not too crowded. The highway was not built exclusively by the people who use it; it is a common good for all the people all the time and we get our share by using it, which is the only way to get our share of anything. And, usually, the highway is the sure way to get somewhere. They who go off on some detour of their own usually come to grief and with much pains and delay arrive nowhere.

Then there is the driving. Traffic conditions and modern life are apt to become jammed at times; but if we play the game together, it is pretty good going most of the time. We have to change our tactics and forget the old-time excellencies of "keeping in the middle of the road." Nobody loves the man who drives in the middle, and we have learned to keep to our own side and give the other fellow a chance to save his fenders and our own. Modern living is as highly socialized as the highroad.

Driving is like living, in that the less you overspeed, the longer your trip will last and the more happiness you will get along the way. The too-slow driver may be as great a nuisance as the speeder, and it likewise takes some patience to wait for the mentally deliberate people who take their own time working toward the point, while

the rest of us wait restlessly for them to reach the place for which we saw all along they were headed.

As to cars. There are many now to choose from and they are all good cars, each in its own class. The little one that we outgrew was a real factor in modern democracy. The highway is filled with cars of all kinds, sizes, powers, and prices, and they all go along together at about the same speed and get there at about the same time; and we can make a pretty satisfactory trip through life even if we cannot afford a high-priced car. We can view the same scenery from the seat of any of them and make the same mileage, and the slow drivers on the outside are those who see the most. Again, just like life.

We are not getting away from our problem of the cure for restlessness. The car has something to teach us about the life of the Spirit. The inner energy that drives the car along, like that which motivates our living, is hidden from sight, an independent power-unit, detachable in operation at will from the car itself. All hope of a successful journey depends on this inner energy-producer, and it is well to know something of the laws of its operation. So is every one that is born of the Spirit.

An automobile motor can be adjusted and set

going without moving the car to which it belongs. The experts have a way of tuning up a motor and trying out its possibilities by itself. Likewise our spiritual selves at times need an overhauling, a tuning-up and work-out with no thought for the moment of the loads we expect them to lift up the grades of life's difficulties. If we neglect our spiritual motors and wait to pray for help till our calamity is upon us, we may find our resources failing us. We are then trying to start our spiritual motors with the clutches and gears enmeshed, which every good driver and every good Christian knows cannot be done. If we call on prayer energies only in emergencies, they are pretty sure to be out of order, and no amount of sudden and frantic cranking will set them going with any power for our needs. If our motors are to be ready for instant service at all times, it is absolutely necessary to spend some time in prayer and contemplation with no reference whatever to immediate necessities, seeking just to know Him and his fellowship and his purpose for our lives. Prayer's lowest service is getting us something that we happen to want in a hurry. An effective prayer-motor needs daily use and frequent testings and occasional overhaulings to keep it in order. Then, when we come to the heavy grade, there will be no question of pick-up

and pulling power. A motor needs daily attention, and so do our spirits demand their daily ration of the supplies of the life of the Spirit.

If we are going to get anywhere, we will have to connect the motor with the car. A clutch is a very important factor in a good equipment. To keep the motor of the Spirit in a glass case of Sunday devotion will not advance us much on our journey. We have needs more vital than that of a beautiful machine to show our friends. To keep it idling on exhibiton may produce a pleasant hum, and we may get a sense of power somewhere near at hand, but idling a motor wears out the machine, burns gas and oil, and gets us nowhere. There is some churchgoing that is merely idling the motor without letting in the clutch and making connection with any useful load of service. And these people with the clutch out complain most about the sermon.

Isaiah had some idea of speeds; the slow people who walk without fainting, the runners who do not weary, and the flyers who go always on "high." Had he lived to-day, he would surely have used the motor car for a figure of prophetic vision. Now, just as then, we need to wait on the Lord until our lives are in tune with eternity and our spiritual energies are renewed. Isaiah knew the cure for restlessness.

There is another possibility; a car can be made to run backward; and admit it we must, there are a few people who use their reverse gears much of the time, with how little progress and how much disaster experience testifies all too well. A reverse gear is a good thing for emergencies, and in tight corners it is sometimes better to back up, but the reverse gear of life was never intended for steady use.

One thing a good motorist does not do. Racing the motor with the clutch out makes a great commotion and sounds like a great effort, but it consumes much fuel and does not help us toward our destination. There are people who race their spiritual motors, open up all energies, and run at top emotional speed and excitement. They have a great time while it lasts, but the motor burns out, begins to shake and rattle and fails on the hill.

This figure of the racing motor is interesting to play with, but in practice there is not much of it done. The people who go in for great noise and excitement in their religion are a negligible fraction of any community. Our trouble is something other than too much enthusiasm about religion. Many suffer more from ignition trouble. Our batteries run down. Both a battery and a human heart need constant recharging. When

they fail we put them "on the line" until they receive new energy. If we are to have effective spiritual energy for the day's need, we will have to keep our chargers working steadily.

Most of us are short of power, at some point along our line of needs. We make so little headway on the journey, we get so little from the country through which we are passing, we find no abiding peace of mind, or joy of spirit, we know no springing overflow of energy. Life drags along, cylinders missing, poor ignition, can't pull half a full load. We know that there is something wrong, but what? Better run the car in, take a little time off from our rushing about, look the case over, find the weak spot, renew the spirit of life, get a new clutch that will connect with a useful load of service, provide good tires that will take the hard bumps off the road and not make bowlders out of cobblestones. Tune up the motor of the Spirit by a daily devotional program that will go on, regardless of conditions and needs, first of all for the sake of getting closer to God himself, for the soul's own enjoyment of fellowship with him. Then, and not till then, shall we know the secret of the historical fact that the great mystics have always been highly useful servants of their fellow men. They had power enough to make the grade.

X

UPS AND DOWNS

THERE is a law of rhythm in the life of the Spirit that may cause us uneasiness of soul if we fail to learn its meaning. We all know that our inspirations, great and small, have a way of fading out and leaving us cold and dark, just when we may need them most. The Greeks learned and formulated two laws of emotional states. They knew that when strong impulse is upon man, he feels that it will last forever—a good time to repeat the ancient maxim, "This too will pass." It always does, and it always returns in due time. The tides of the great deep flow both ways.

Through the wilderness the Israelites followed the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. Changing, flaming, fading, as unsubstantial as fog, blazing up and fading back into mist, where could we find a better figure for our emotional states? Had we had the choosing, we would have made it a rock, a mountain, a pyramid—something solid and lasting. But the people were on the march and needed a guiding emblem that could move ahead of them and serve alike by night or day. And God was in the misty,

moving thing as he is in the changing, restless spirit of our own time. We register his presence, make our contacts with his own reality through this same shifting spiritual consciousness. Our apprehensions of things divine flare up and die down; radiate light and turn to shadow, shift from form to form. Every new outburst of fire cools off in a few hours or days, and we look for another quickening of the cloudy pillar before us. The eternal factor is not the cloud at all, but God within the shadow that shifts across our consciousness.

This has been a disconcerting discovery for many of us. We thought that it was all settled and we would never be gloomy again, only to find the vision fading and the exaltation passing away. Instead of billowed glory we find misty cloud. If we are young and inexperienced in life, we imagine that God has gone away and forgotten us. Later we learn the illusion of the certainty that hangs about any emotional reaction while it lasts. For some reason we are glad or sad or sorry or angry, and for the instant we are sure that we shall always be in that state of mind. We have won a victory over a moral fault and think that we shall never have to repeat the struggle. An assurance of peace fills our hearts and we tell ourselves that "here our souls

shall ever stay and sit and sing themselves away in everlasting bliss."

Peter on the mountain wanted to set up a permanent residence, as we have often wished to do under similar circumstances. The house of happiness looks like a good place to settle down. Later, at the foot of the hill, facing the hard facts of life, we are in danger of relapse and despair. "Wherever am I to find a blessing that will stick?" wailed one emotional addict in a bad reaction after one of his frenzied "seasons of uplift."

In time we learn better. The Greeks were right—these states of mind all do fade, like the mist, and give way to something else. The brighter the glory by night, the paler the cloud on the morning after. The higher the wave, the deeper the following ebb. In time we come to distrust too much tension; we know what is to follow. Not that emotion in itself is to be avoided. Better to have lived and felt and sagged than never to have known the transforming power of an experience of things too great to be uttered. Healthy, normal, emotional quickening of consciousness gives life and vigor to personality and puts hearts into service. Any man who with plodding pulse can go through the high moments and deep hours that in some form

come to us all, is half-dead. But this legitimate stirring of the deepest waters of life is quite another matter from the emotional spasms that throw us out of balance and leave us stale and nerveless in the end. It matters a good deal whether an angel troubled the waters of life, or we just worked up the splash ourselves.

The answer to this intermittent form of restlessness lies in the law of rhythm in life. There is no satisfactory interpretation of the phenomena of human consciousness without taking into account this law of action and reaction that sways the mind from flame to fog. Rhythm begins on the physical level of being. Children increase in weight and height and intelligence by uneven accelerations. Any educational process is marked by "learning planes"; first a rapid gain, then a time when all seems to stand still, then another jump and a following pause. Language study supplies a typical case. First interest, enthusiasm, progress. Then dullness, difficulty, distaste and discouragement. The veterans understand and know that a new and rapid gain will follow in time, but the beginners are appalled by their difficulties. There is nothing to worry about except the temptation to give up, which is fatal. The pedagogues and psychologists have discovered that the thing to do is to march straight on, regardless of enthusiasm or drudg-

ery. The difficulties will vanish and new light will flame in the cloud.

The longer one lives the less he depends on enthusiasm or novelty for steady performance or permanent results in anything. Keep steadily at it, whether you like it or not, and before long a strange and wonderful thing will happen, whether in language study or the life of the Spirit. There will surely come a new sense of attainment, a larger access of power, a sudden jump to a higher level. What has happened? Simply that the steady, plodding work has registered all along down in the inner reservoir of being, and when this deposit works its way up to the surface, there we are, and all at once. Such have been some spiritual uplifts and such may we look for in any normal life.

In the life of the Spirit, there is a normal and healthy fluctuation that has nothing to do with moral lapses or duties left undone. Our danger is in the tendency to quit as soon as the light begins to fade. We neglect our prayers, forget our Bibles, and leave on the shelf the good books so bravely begun. If we keep straight on and act as if we were feeling all right, soon will come new power and freedom. To stop trying is to leave ourselves in the sag. In practice we may interpret this experience according to our doctrinal training. Most of us have been grateful

recipients of many consecutive blessings and have found them real motive forces to help us on our way. One night a friend dropped into a city mission and was approached by a "worker" who wanted to know if he had been born again. "Yes, many times," he answered.

Whatever our theories or theologies, our inspirations and uplift work by the law of rhythm, about which much more might be said, we should accept and take advantage of the current when it flows our way and hold steady when it swings into reverse. Keep on going and the cold cloud will again blaze in glory and light our pathway with the radiance of spiritual certainty. We all come to our Dead Seas and Jordans and Jerichos. We may as well accept them as a normal part of life and proceed as before.

In this there is a certain stimulating appeal of the impossible as a part of every complete life. If we are to drink to the depths the cup of life's experiences, we must know the color of the inside of the shadow and know it for ourselves. There are floods and walls and obstacles for all of us. The technique of meeting them may have high value for our dark hours. It was a veteran missionary administrator who put it this way: "How often have I faced the impossible in a situation. I held steady, trusted God, kept cool, waited a little, and invariably something

happened. Someone made a chance remark, an incidental suggestion and there was the answer. Why did I not think of that before? Because my mind had not yet had time for that ripening judgment and factor of pause so necessary for the gathering up of all available data on the matter in hand. God seems to work through our own unconsciousness if we give him the time that he needs to get us in line. It is often his way of answering our prayers."

It is now time to take courage. These ups and downs are not a device of Satan set to buffet us in our struggle upward. It is simply that we are constituted that way and Satan has nothing whatever to do with it, unless we allow ourselves to lose heart and quit. It is God's way of working in and through us, that we may attain the stature of the Perfect Man, Christ Jesus, and hold on steadily through the changing phases of our earthly life. Thus it shall come to pass that through our very restlessness and changeableness, we shall find rest unto our souls and fellowship with God.

XI

LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES

THERE is an inarticulate quality about our deepest experiences that sometimes causes uneasiness of spirit. Try as we may, when we are most profoundly stirred, we cannot express in intelligible form the energies that surge within our souls. Deep calls unto deep, but our answer is as meaningless as sign language to the uninitiated. There is no speech or language in which we can say what is passing within us. We wonder just why it is that we can talk glibly enough about anything and everything except the most vital and important things of our lives. And this happens when we would give much to be able to pour into some sympathetic ear the tale of our secret strivings and yearnings. When we do try we stumble and stutter and give up in despair.

On the other side we cry out to the Infinite God and know that what we know about him is also limited by our small understanding and between our dumbness toward men and helplessness before God, we are pretty much marooned on an island of silence in the sea of our vast unknowing.

To our surprise we note that all men are not so troubled. The Mohammedan devotee calmly spreads his prayer-rug in the sight of all men and proceeds with his devotions, regardless of the conventions or convenience of everybody else. The devout Roman Catholic kneels unabashed on the steps of the church, if there be no room within. Sincere Buddhists have no embarrassment in practicing their devotions in public. Why, then, do we become self-conscious and stammer our way to some safer topic, as soon as we find ourselves dealing with matters of the Spirit?

That is not all. Do we engage in religious conversation in our families? Hang religious pictures on the walls of our homes? Perform our devotions in public? Get caught saying our prayers? I should say not! We admire the good Catholics for keeping their churches open for prayer, regardless of hours of service. We would like to do likewise if we could, but we can't. I tried it once and found out why. Not for the world would we be caught by our neighbors kneeling in an empty church! They might think us queer.

For all of which there are reasons. There is a moral self-consciousness that is not all to our discredit. When a man kneels at noonday in the market place and begins to pray, he may not associate that act with any sense of guilt or un-

worthiness on his own part. He is perhaps expecting to have good luck in his afternoon's business as a reward for his prayers. The old Pharisees made a practice of street-corner praying because it flattered their religious reputations.

Most of us frankly confess that this unashamed attitude is not for us. When we bow down to pray, in the forest or the sanctuary or the closet, we know that we are unworthy, but we have no desire to proclaim that fact to the neighbors. They know us too well already. Betweeen the publican and the Pharisee, we know where to class ourselves. For me to pray on the sidewalk would imply that I was plain crazy, or that I must have done something pretty bad, to resort to such desperate measures. I do not intend to proclaim to all the world that I am as bad as that—not if I can help it. Were I to kneel in the street at noontime or on the steps of the First Presbyterian Church, when the congregation is sedately filing out, I should be tapped on the shoulder and asked to move along. And everybody else would go away as soon as possible and talk fast about something else.

There are people who can talk easily of spiritual things. As a kind of protective coloring they speak of high spiritual attainments. "Polarized" terms and technical expressions are as conjurer's balls in the air, and their fluency means little

to us, other than a torrent of words. They are not cranks precisely, but frothy souls whose shallow waters are easily stirred to fervid tossings and who deal largely in fixed terms and repeated formulas. We may envy their facility of expression but we are not helped by their testimonies. Wherefore we fall silent the more and avoid frank discussion of our inner problems. We simply will not reveal ourselves to people of that sort. When they come at us with, "How's your soul to-day, my brother?" we have urgent business elsewhere. One of these emotional devotees who poured out her soul to anyone who would listen, told me excitedly that her wayward daughter "day before yesterday took salvation, yesterday she took sanctification, and this morning she took healing—hallelujah!" Subsequent events indicated that all three had been bad "takes."

The deeper our experiences, the more difficult they are to discuss—and for a very good reason. The language of the Spirit, if it be genuine, is not English or any other earth-born speech, and the further we go on the way, the harder it is to tell about it in a foreign tongue. It is not a case of inventing new words with special meanings—that would be easy enough—but of something that cannot be said in words at all. Less and less do our terms serve for what eye has

not seen nor ear heard of the good word of life that has come to us through our own direct contact with Reality. We are dealing with a higher level of consciousness, and the best of the mystics have never been able to tell just what it was that they heard and saw and felt. Their efforts have constituted an invitation to come and see for ourselves. We cannot tell much about what they try to say, but we get the idea that it is of importance to them and might be for us.

This very inarticulateness of spiritual experience is one of the tests of its genuineness. We need not envy the glib talkers about blood and altars and blessings and instantaneous initiations and standardized states of grace. They have their reward, and for whatever help they may get or give we offer thanks. If your own inner consciousness turns from these set terms and gropes for some more adequate expression-form, be glad that there are deeper values than any combination of letters of our alphabet can yet express.

There are not many people with whom we can talk freely and be understood on any profound matter. This is something more than temperamental affinity or similarity of tastes. It is a case of knowing the same language because we have learned it in the same school of experience. Veterans of the same war have no trouble in talk-

ing when they get together. People who have seen Fuji, or the Inland Sea, or the Temple of Heaven, or Saint Peter's or Canterbury, or the Mississippi flood, have something to talk about, especially with those who have visited the same places.

If all this helps us not when we deal with the uninitiated, we have to remember that the final evidence is not our ability to talk about profound matters, but our intelligent understanding of what is passing within. The vision of the Unseen does not necessarily make a man loquacious.

There remains a problem. How are we to know that in our dumb hours, when we feel within us the unspeakable, we are not merely listening to the roar in our own ears? The valid answer comes in that consciousness of reality that is ever one of the unmistakable signs of genuineness in the life of the Spirit. The kingdom of heaven, and the final reference, are within you. "We know," exclaims John over and over, and he did not think it important to give technical proofs of why or how he knew. When our deepest inner assurances fit the outer facts of the best we know, and at last measure up with the mind that was in Christ, then we know that we are dealing with ultimate verities and not passing fancies. John had something like this in mind when he wrote that the final test was that of

acknowledgment that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh, a statement more far-reaching than the local and passing controversy to which it was addressed.

This enforced silence is not all handicap. Silence implies listening, and, listening, we come to new contacts with the life within. Easy talking may let off steam and leave us powerless. Silence clamps on the lid, tightens the valve, and presently we have power enough to do something. Too much talking about ourselves, about our inner states, our changing feelings and passing ideals gives us away and leaves us at the mercy of our listeners. Moral power, with its magic of reserve, may have very close relation to the silent depths that we find so hard to talk about. There is no sufficient cause for restlessness in this; rather let us rejoice in the heights and depths and lengths and breadths of the things revealed to us when we come to know Him as he is.

XII

UNSOUGHT BLESSINGS

BLESSING-SEEKING as an end in itself has accounted for much restlessness of spirit on the part of people whose strivings after ecstasy have not brought returns commensurate with the effort made. When someone tells of an emotional uplift, a special help in time of need, a sense of joy and freedom, forthwith our own hearts are stirred and we begin to "seek" the same. In practice this is not very profitable, for we never find exact duplicates in emotional states. Spiritual blessings come in odd sizes; it is easier to alter other people's clothes to fit us than to copy their nontransferable experiences to our own lives. The standardized type-experiences of the professional evangelists do not happen to all people, no matter how earnest the striving therefor. Some morbid souls have gone so far as to imagine that they are hopeless because they could not feel like someone else told them to feel.

The fruits of the Spirit are not bought and sold, or transferred from one to another. Every man must grow his own garden and eat of his own harvest. There is no vicarious planting and

weeding and watering. Mere agonizing never grew a crop of anything, unless it went on to do something else that may have produced results for which the groaning and weeping got the credit. Every one of us may know for himself the good things of the active, normal life of the Spirit, but not by merely crying out for them.

Love seeketh not its own, but its object. He that saveth his blessings as something precious to be hidden away is sure to lose them. If we want spiritual health and vigor and all that goes therewith, we can get them by forgetting our feelings in fellowship and service.

Some people do get "happy in the Lord." Why not all of us? Some people get happy at a ball game or at a dinner party or anything else that quickens their inner consciousness into a higher rhythm of experience. Making all allowance for differences of temperament, we have reason to look for some measure of spiritual satisfaction in such terms as fit us personally. No one thinks that sighs and gloom are the normal lot of the child of God.

Here the ancient experts come to our help. We are to look for the "Beyond that is also within," and the Beyond is a person rather than a place or state of mind. States of mind are produced by rather definite causes, and if we knew fully all causes and inner conditions and reactions,

probably we could produce any desired state of mind at will.

What we profoundly need and most earnestly want is God himself, and here the best of mystics agree with the tests of universal experience. "Thou, oh Christ, art all I want," sang one of the most practical or religious leaders. "More than all in thee I find." The hymns and diaries and meditations of the seekers after God in all ages abound in expressions that concentrate the attention, not on states of mind or blessings at all, but on a realized consciousness of the presence of God. "Whom have I on earth beside thee, Whom in heaven but thee!" they sing and are content. Paul put it strongly, "For with me to live is Christ";[1] that is, for me to work, talk, sing, play, think is for Christ to do those things in me. "It is no longer I that live, but Christ that lives in me." Out of the realization of that fellowship, Paul had all the sensations he needed and more than he knew how to express. He had little to say about spiritual blessings in themselves, but he had very much to say about Christ.

The final test of the value and validity of our search-method is its objective. If we are looking for benefits, better health, better pay, more ad-

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[1]Phil. 1. 21 (Weymouth). All Scripture quotations from the *New Testament in Modern Speech* are used by permission of The Pilgrim Press, owners of copyright.

vantages, we may know that we are associate members of the fraternity of Simon Magus. If we really want to know God, and want to know him enough to forego some of the otherwise good things of life in order to spend time in his presence, then we are sure to find him and be content.

Cultivating the graces is good exercise, but pulling them up to see how fast they are growing is bad husbandry. Too close watching of one's spiritual states, noting any little increase of patience, meekness, forbearance, defeats itself in self-consciousness and takes attention away from its Supreme Object. Too much fussing over a fruit tree spoils the crop. The normal objective is not blessing or grace or anything else whatever except just God himself; to know him, to be conscious of him, to feel him near; knowing that if we may but touch the hem of his garment and tarry with him, in due time we shall be more like him.

Nor do we gain anything by trying to bring back the hours of blessedness we knew "when first we found the Lord." There is value in a focussed and dramatic religious experience; at least it affords a base-line and a starting point. But returning to the starting point does not set us forward on the journey toward the better beyond. Base-lines are to be worked from, not

toward. With the present shift of emphasis from dramatic climax to religious education, we have less sudden or climacteric conversions and more of the following-on-to-know type of religious experience. Much time has been lost by earnest people in trying to regain something passed by forever. A definite emotional experience, fading away into normal religious consciousness, was misunderstood to be a falling away from the "state of grace." Disappointment followed, with the occasionally renewed struggle to regain the lost ground. As well try to regain the bloom of youth or the springing step and hearty vigor of the golden age of life.

This is but another way of saying that the final goal of spiritual aliveness, "Christian experience," if you like, is not any emotional state whatever, but a normal and dependable consciousness of God, in the reality of whose presence our restlessness fades into abiding certainty. We steadily make our way onward toward the sunset, while the brightness of the early dawn of our spiritual living remains as a sanctifying memory, something to look back upon with contentment and gladness. Better than memories of past sunrises is the steadily increasing inner radiance of the abiding presence of Him in whom we live and move and have our being. To be kept in continued spiritual good health has

higher value in the soul's life than an occasional spectacular cure for our religious ailments. We are usually most healthy spiritually when we are most intent on something else than our religious pulses and symptoms of passing phases of soul-health.

XIII

OVERFLOWS

SPIRITUAL receptivity does not work by exactly predictable processes; if it did, we would probably learn the rules and lose interest. We never know just what we are to get when we listen in to the voices of the air, which adds to the interest of listening. In a far country a friend insisted that sleep was unimportant, I must come over and listen. I did and the results were much mixed. He said that it was Buenos Aires on the air, but I never heard anything like that in the Argentine capital.

There is refreshment for our spirits in the spontaneity of our contacts with the unseen kingdom. There are glad surprises, the sudden breaking through of new voices, the flash of far horizons that make our excursions so interesting. If any one prefers the phonograph method, all prearranged, labeled and catalogued, very well. Some of us find our great reward in the uncharted courses of the winds of the Spirit that blow across our lives with spices from distant shores and whisper fragments of music from unseen choirs in heavenly places.

Life is never exactly predictable. The stars in their courses may be charted for ten thousand years ahead; we know exactly what they are going to do. A baby in a cradle, a bird on a bough, a living soul born again in the kingdom of spirit—no one knows what they are going to do before the sun sets. Life, normal life, has a bubble-over quality and does not fit our little containers. A stone monument will stay put, for a time at least, but a boy, never. "Go and see what the children are doing," said a tired mother to the maid, "and tell them to stop it." A steel bridge is good for a calculable number of years, but nobody knows how long a man will last or how far he will go; there are too many factors in him that defy mathematics. And it is just that part of us that eludes all formulas that lifts us above the material creation and makes us become sons of God. Spiritual homicide is any act or process that makes a machine of a man and extinguishes the spark of splendor within him. Making living men into cannon fodder or factory feeders is defying and defeating God's highest purpose in creation.

Few men understood this spontaneous quality of the Spirit until Jesus came and explained it to Nicodemus. Strange that no one before had thought how like the winds that blow are the phases of spiritual consciousness. We do not

know all about the wind, even yet, nor do we know much about the laws of the Spirit, though nineteen Christian centuries have passed. But we can recognize direction and velocity and run up our sails, erect our mills, and take advantage of a power in our lives. We may get as much help as though we knew all about it. Lack of complete understanding does not prevent our receiving benefits, else would we cease this moment to live and breathe. "There is no searching of His understanding," nor is there any exact predicting of just what will happen to and in us; but we do know when the winds of the Spirit are blowing, we can hear the sound thereof, and if we take advantage of them, we shall not be left helpless. The yet unknown processes of life need not trouble us, provided we know something about how to use them. When logic comes to its limits, life comes in and lifts us God-ward.

Long before Jesus spoke to Nicodemus, a poet of old sang, "Deep calleth unto deep." Possibly he was thinking of the echoes of a mountain waterfall, and that reminded him of something within his own heart. Some one was calling across the spaces, from the great deeps of eternity to the great deeps in his own heart. We need not trouble about the mystery of unsounded depths in the universe; there are uncharted soundings in our own hearts. There are eternal

heights that call out to the best that is in us and when our hearts respond the spaces disappear and we find the kingdom of heaven close at hand. These unknown inner depths of our lives contain potential energies, gifts, talents, reserves of endurance, and resources of device. Life has for us other dimensions than those we now know, and the rudiments of them are deep within our own natures, awaiting the call of the Great Deep without. We live along meagerly on the surface of our greater selves, farming shallow soils that cover gold mines. Is it strange that at times our spirits go stale and life falls flat about us? The satisfying things are deeper down than surface speed and jungle-rhythm. Here is the curse of superficial living—it cuts us off from the profound and imperishable and satisfying things that bring us our closest relations with reality.

In practice all this is not so easy or simple as it sounds in print. It is no trifling matter to break the crusts of convention and dig down through our own indifference and inertia to the hidden depths below. Sometimes the process breaks up a life and sometimes the hard subsoil must be softened with tears before the riches below come to light. Gold was first discovered in California by a carpenter digging a ditch for a small flour mill. When the waters washed away the surface soil, there was a yellow gleam

among the rocks that started the gold rush of forty-nine. Many of us keep somewhere in our memories a dusty picture of some glad hour when we did respond to the call of the deep and the touch of a divine hand was on our hearts. The faded memory reminds us of what might have been an overflowing fullness of life—if we had followed on. Sometimes, amid the rush and commotion of life, the old picture catches our eye, and we wonder if ever again we may know a conscious abundance in the deeps of our lives. Is it too late now? It is never too late until we have made a last and unchangeable rejection of the Spirit who deals with us on the profoundest level of our beings. That is the sin against the Holy Spirit. Until then we shall sometimes hear the call of the Deep like the haunting boom of the gongs at Nikko and Nara, that sing on in the ear for unbelievable intervals of time. The magic and mystery of their call are fitting symbols of those spiritual undertones of life that fill our hearts with echoes from the halls of eternity. We may not always know what these tones are saying to us, but no matter about that, our hearts respond and we know that we are listening to the trumpets that sound from the jasper walls. On and out there is Ultimate Reality, and some day we shall enter those gates and know to the full what we glimpse and believe in here.

John said it in his own way. "Of his fullness have we received, grace for grace." This was his magnificent idea, that our small hearts are to be filled with the same graces that overflowed in Jesus Christ. John is not thinking of a catalogued list of the excellencies of Jesus, but of the spontaneous, more than enough, overflow of his gracious abundance that so marked his life and character. Verily there is more ahead of us than we dare to ask or imagine in this humdrum daily grind of conventionalized living, more than we have been able to visualize in our highest moments.

Very good for the saints and mystics, but what about us, the everyday people who have work to do, loads to lift, who are neither mystics nor experts in spiritual things? God must have something for us also, and since there are so many more of us than of the specialists, it must be that he has a considerable place in his plans for our interests and service. The fact is that we look upon the experts as being a little out of normal anyway, and sometimes wonder whether they or we are the variations from standard. Where do we come in at this feast of Spirit?

We come in by the steady, day-by-day doing of our work in the fear of the Lord and sometimes in the power of his might. We come by the following on to know the Lord, by the steady

gains that come through the daily dozen of devotion, by association with our spiritual betters who are never very far from any one of us, by taking the life of the Spirit seriously and paying at least as much attention to it as to social affairs, by making an honest and continued effort to know the mind that was in Christ and to walk daily in his presence. Not very spectacular this, and at a certain dramatic disadvantage in contrast with the heralded benefits of the Three-cornered Gospel, One True Doctrine, the Home of All Truth, the Mystic Seven, the Falling Rain Mission or any of the various get-blessed-quick short cuts to ecstasy.

The steady, unspectacular following on in the steps of Christ brings to life some permanent factors of dependable help and comfort and certainty that stand the strains of life and go with us to the end. Of the solid and enduring qualities, the freakish and frothy phenomena are mere imitations. The man who goes steadily forward, keeping his eyes on Jesus, will in the long years get very much out of life and he will be apt to be a very good neighbor to live with. Along with these day-in-and-day-out blessings will come occasional overflows, so much the better for being unexpected and unpredictable, and by these glimpses of the heights we may check our course and measure our march. There are certainties

that arise within us from time to time by which we may record our position and know that we are on the upward path. We are not aimlessly wandering about in the wilderness, but are definitely on our way to the land of promise. We cannot tell much about the coming and going of these occasional flashes of assurance, but they give us our contacts with that vaster universe where our questions will be answered and the crooked will be made straight, and at last we shall know. Life is not illusion, or phantom. It is search and adventure and occasional glimpses of the greater ranges beyond the sunset. In this normal journeying toward the infinite we find the answer to our restless demand to know what it is all about.

XIV

FAITH, HOPE AND REALITY

JOHN STUART MILL maintained that feelings and states of consciousness were to be included among the realities. This would be simple enough if our feelings were constant and reliable, which they are not. Our inner reactions to spiritual stimuli vary under changing conditions and with shifting moods of consciousness. Our sense of actuality comes from the agreement of consciousness with the that-which-is without ourselves. For practical purposes, the sun becomes a reality for me when its rays light and warm the world in which I live. The stellar universe becomes increasingly real and vivid to my mind as I understand it better. Final values are registered in human consciousness.

Our reactions to emotional stimuli are as various as spring weather. The vision dawns within me and I am affected in some definite way. I note that the price of cotton has risen, that the Mississippi River has fallen, that the revolution has broken out in China, or that British politics has taken a radical turn, and I feel depressed, elated, confident, dismayed, or indifferent. What

I do about it, if anything, will depend on my mental reaction to the facts as I understand them.

I look about me for the elusive why of all things and I see a vast total of sin and suffering and sorrow. Thinking of this, I become depressed and wonder how men can struggle on against such odds. So much of toil and tears, so little of play and smiles. Bunk and blah and bluster—who shall deliver me from the trinity of unreality! My reaction is that of despondency.

But why all this gloom? Something is missing at the heart of me; the light of hope has gone dim. That is it. Hope is the cure for despair. I need a new hope, a larger hope, a hope that refuses to look only at the gloomy side of life, and insists upon a more just and accurate appraisal of experience values.

Hope is the cure for despair and it works from within. Hopefulness is not an increase of goods nor isolation from annoyances. Hope is a state of mind. Hope relights the altar flame and supplies new fuel to fires gone dim. Hope shines on through the gloom and brings peace in the midst of disaster. Hope unlocks the riddles of life and answers the questions of the heart. To renew a man, a people, a cause, a church, kindle a new hope, propose a worthy objective, create a new will-to-believe that it can

be done and the ebbing tides will turn and flow in again. To reclaim a discouraged and demoralized soul, don't begin to condemn, nor to talk about faith; bring in a new hope and see the withered life begin to fill with the content of a new purpose and a vital energy. Hope lights the traveler on his way; hope breathes the breath of life into the dry bones; hope is the light beyond, the glow of the early dawn, a sense of something better ahead; hope is a renewing and heartening conviction that it can be done.

Hope awakens new and unmeasured energies of spirit and stirs the will to do the impossible. "Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame. . . ." Hope makes giants out of pigmies and explains a thousand miracles of endurance, achievement. "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick," but through hope in action we renew our contacts with reality. We can consciously "lay hold on hope" and we can "hope continually." And if we suppose that hope is mere self-delusion or auto suggestion, we are reminded that we are "begotten again unto a lively hope," that it is something that comes from without and lays hold upon our drooping spirits. Too bad that some one did not write a hope chapter in the New Testament as we have a love chapter and a faith chapter, but the spirit of hope fills the book;

the New Testament is the hope book of all the ages.

Leaving figures of speech, which, after all, tend to take the edge off the term, we come to this: that without hopefulness of spirit no man can clearly see life as it is. Discouraged people always see things out of focus. To come to conscious contacts with reality we must, first of all, see clearly that God is and that he is the rewarder of those who diligently seek him, that effective relations with God are possible, and that the final outcome of life's totals may be good for those who love God.

Is there, then, hope that we may attain hopefulness of spirit? Can hope be attained, increased, diminished, lost? Can I command my mental states? Say to my soul, "Soul, be hopeful," and the miracle will be done? Not so simple, but I can cultivate, if not command, my state of mind; and if I will, I can steadily increase my hopefulness of spirit. I can review the reasons for the hope that is within me, I can by an act of will steadily fix my attention on the eternal facts of God's merciful and beneficent dealings with men, and I can count over again my own abundant mercies of the days agone. I can "lay hold" of the hope that is set before me. And if I keep it up long enough, the sluggish current of despondency will begin

to move, and presently the floods will break and carry me from the mud flats out to the open sea and the strong tides of God's eternal purpose for my life. To assume a positive and confident attitude toward God, I can be hopeful if I look at the facts, all the facts, and through their total inferences reach through to the eternal Reality behind all facts.

If without faith it is impossible to please God, it is equally true that without hope it is impossible to see life whole. If faith is the evidence of things hoped for, then a man must have something to hope for before he can exercise faith. Hope may be nothing more than aircastle building unless it be linked with faith. Hope sees clearly the vision glorious, faith lays hold on the actuality of its realization in life and experience. We glimpse reality through hope, we lay hold on it by faith. Faith is a voluntary act, something I must do myself. To pray for faith is a waste of time. If I put to work whatever faith I have, if I arise and follow the vision of hope, faith will grow from more to more, as a runner develops speed by daily practice. If hope opens the door, faith enters in. If hope brings understanding, faith affords realization. If hope discovers the sources of power, faith releases the energies and lifts life to higher levels. "Thy faith hath saved thee," said Jesus.

We have lost heavily through the stagnation of good words that were once living streams but have gotten into the eddies of set meanings and conventional interpretations. When we begin to sing a word, it is apt to be accepted more for its pious sound than for its quickening power. Such has been the fate of the words "faith" and "hope." They have lost their sharp edges, and the more we eulogize them and write poetry about them, the less they stir our hearts and waken our wills. Just what is this faith that lays hold of the impossible and moves mountains of difficulty?

One effective approach to the possible living content of faith is through the experiences of people who are intelligent enough to analyze their own inner reactions and sincere enough to give an unbiased report of their findings. To a group of highly trained missionaries I once put the following questions:

For you, is faith certainty or adventure?

On what do you base your own faith in God?

Which is better: to know the truth or to search for the truth?

Can a man will to believe, whether convinced or not?

They were vigorous, healthy, efficient young people with from two to ten years experience in their fields of service. Located in one of the

most difficult and isolated fields, they had reason to know what they were talking about, and to speak from the actualities of experience rather than any theological or traditional presumptions. The questions were set before them and a day's time was given for reflection before formulating the replies which were in writing and for the most part unsigned. The results were highly suggestive and valuable for any student of religious consciousness.

Most of the answers stated in various forms, that in the experience of the writer, faith was a mixture of certainty and adventure. "To me, faith is a willingness to risk something because of a certainty. I have faith in an under teacher because of my certainty regarding some previous small successes. For this reason, I am willing to risk her in larger responsibilities. I hope that it will not rain, but that involves no risk. If I have faith that it will not rain, then I risk my hat and shoes on my faith."

"My faith in God is based on my experience of God as a friend. He has never failed me yet; he has given me a sense of his presence and a work to do and is now a reality in my life. With this much certain I do not hesitate to take any needed risk to follow him."

"For me faith is both certainty and risk-taking. Because of experiences that I can not adequately

explain, I have certain convictions. Building on these I am ready to adventure upon that for which I yet lack conclusive evidence. My experience is yet incomplete, but as positive returns accumulate, I find joy in believing that day by day my God becomes more identical with the God of the New Testament. I feel that I know in part, but, like the man who has found a few pearls and sets out to complete the chain, happy with each new-found gem, so I need not wait for finality in order to be satisfied. Every new pearl of experience adds to my sense of reality."

"Faith is an assurance that is almost certainty, with enough of adventure to make it thrilling. I base my faith in God on my need of him and on what he has done for me and others."

"Faith for me is a combination of assurance and risk. If I had no basis for certainty, I could have no courage to venture upon the things that I cannot prove. I base my faith in God on my own experience. Something in me is in tune with him."

"I think that faith is more adventure than certainty. Faith for me is not passive assent to creeds, it is launching out into the unknown, with the confident hope of finding the truth; it is an active search for truth, a willingness to go ahead though not sure of the way. Faith in God is the best working hypothesis I know for

approach to the unanswered problems of life. I cannot determine the exact nature of God, but I believe that there is a Power working everywhere for good and that good will come to me if I can maintain close relations with him."

When it came to the question, "Can a man will to believe, whether convinced or not?" the answers were concise and suggestive.

"One must be convinced in order to believe, but he can open or close his mind to evidence."

"Let me be convinced about a matter and it becomes possible to will to believe it."

"There are people who seem able to believe anything they wish, but they lose their faith easily under strain, and such people are usually narrow-minded and refuse to accept new evidence if it does not accord with their desires."

"To believe effectively, one must will to accept evidence, to be convinced, to 'believe unto salvation.'"

"It seems to me that unless faith is a dominant factor in the mental attitude, it is impossible to believe anything beyond mere sense evidence."

"Considering belief as a working hypothesis in the search for truth, a man can will to accept the evidence and follow its implications, therefore he can will to believe."

"Which is better, truth, or search for truth?" This classic question brought replies that regis-

tered personal reactions rather than speculative formulas. These missionaries were talking out of their own consciousness.

"Desire to learn truth is a more potent factor in consciousness than certainty concerning established findings. Desire to know leads to continued search and constantly extending knowledge. But when a man thinks that he knows, he is apt to drop the search, close his mind, and miss new manifestations of truth."

"If the truth can be known, it is better to know it; but if one has a consuming desire to know the truth and honestly goes after it, he will in time attain his goal, provided it be among the things knowable."

"How can one know the truth without searching for it?"

"Search for truth is better than knowing truth, for truth is not a fixed, static thing, but for me, expands with my increased understanding."

"Even if I could know the truth in its final form, it would not be so energizing for my life as the continued search for certainty. It is the constant going forward that makes life a growing, worth-while thing and keeps me from going stale."

"The truth is so vast that I can never expect to know it all, nor any considerable part of it."

"I do not envy a person floundering in seas of doubt and uncertainty, nor do I admire one who is mentally locked in a casket of certainty, absolutely sure of everything. He is to be pitied—and left alone."

Among other things, these answers indicate an open-mindedness that bespeaks a wholesome attitude toward life. There is no flavor of the cloister or trace of the casuistries of the schoolman. These missionaries were all teachers in high-grade schools and in constant contact with life at its most difficult and suggestive age. Through their own seekings after reality they had found working contacts that made them highly efficient in their social relations and brought to them a wholesome sense of the worthwhileness of their own existence.

XV

CERTAINTY AND SATISFACTION

It is a matter of experience that the hope of something ahead and a faith which accepts the evidence, whatever its implications, and follows on toward the goal, does establish contacts with reality that release fountains of spiritual energy and effect satisfactory relations with life as a whole. The missionaries who wrote their replies to the questions were living wholesome lives and doing worth-while work. Were they satisfied in their own minds? Three questions were propounded as a test.

"Are you satisfied with your own religious life?"

"If satisfied, in what do you find satisfaction?"

"If not satisfied, why not? What is lacking?"

Again the answers register original experience and wholesome relations with life. Most of them confess to a partial satisfaction, with a clear discernment between the dissatisfactions of incomplete attainments and the restlessness growing out of unsatisfactory contacts with life and returns on investment of time and service. About one half of all answers were, "I am satisfied only in part." Some of the others follow:

"To be wholly contented would mean spiritual stagnation."

"While my experience of God is definite and satisfactory and my fellowship with him is sure, yet there is an inner urge that calls for a deeper and more positive fellowship."

"I know that I do have some effective relation with God, but I feel that there is much land yet to be taken before I can be really satisfied. Complete satisfaction might lead to stagnation."

When it came to sources and causes of satisfaction, the positive note was strongly in evidence. There were no anæmic recluses.

"I find satisfaction in service for others and in trying to discover and realize God's will in my life."

"I find satisfaction in my discontent with my present attainments and in trying for higher ground."

"I find satisfaction in making progress toward a richer and more effective spiritual life."

"I have learned the futility of expecting an inspirational stirring to last indefinitely. It is like thinking that a grand bath could be permanent benefit. It is the daily scrubbing that keeps us clean. Daily prayer and devotion are the essential things; the inspiration of meeting great men, hearing great sermons or addresses,

and reading exceptionally good books are the luxuries."

"I have found satisfaction in answering the call to obey Christ."

"I find satisfaction in the freedom of Christ which attunes my life with reality."

"Such satisfactions as I know come from a consciousness of doing something in a positive way for the benefit of mankind."

"I find satisfaction in a sense of having made some positive progress in growth in the things of the Spirit."

When it came to the causes of dissatisfaction, which in some form or degree was almost always present, the answers were focussed on the almost universal sense of discrepancy between the perfect ideals and imperfect attainments:

"I cannot always connect my own inner devotions with the objective task. I love my pupils, but when they irritate me by misconduct, I get as angry as the next one."

"I think that all progressive minds constantly aspire to greater things and consequently become restless under present limits of attainment."

"It often seems difficult to know the will of God, and it is easy to lose contact with him in the work of the day. I lose out when I relegate God to some far-off place in the universe."

"I have so often allowed the daily doing to

cut into the life of devotion. Physical activities, easier in a way, take time from the quieter life."

"Growth is so slow, so spasmodic and intermittent. Sometimes the trails become so mixed that it is hard to know which to take."

"There is a discouraging difference between the powers of impression and expression. At times it seems as natural as breathing, and then again it seems forced and put on. Adversity seems to be essential to spiritual growth."

"I believe that if I could live in closer realization of God, I would have less discouragement to face."

"I am often not satisfied because I allow my work and its annoyances to come between me and Jesus as a helper and a friend."

"All Christians I believe are restless because we have set ourselves to attain that which we can never reach—the character of Christ. There is much satisfaction along the way, but every step reveals others on ahead. I believe that those who do not follow Christ are restless for a different reason; the latent divine in their natures makes them feel the lack of that which they are not, though they may not be able to name what it is that they miss."

Out of these replies come the general statement and conviction that deep in the human heart lies the unquenchable hunger for certainty,

but that, after all, these people were keen on the scent for reality and found more of satisfaction in the quest than in any final formulas for truth. In the best sense of the term, they were good sports in their contacts with life. "I want something that I can be sure of," exclaimed a young fellow whose college experiences had left him groping amid the ruins of an outgrown childhood faith. Most of us know how he felt. Speculate and venture as we may, we have to come finally to some satisfactory basis for our faith or we are adrift on a very wide and uncharted sea. We may turn back to the mechanical and literal ideas of our childhood, as Noah's dove returned to the ark; we find no resting place for our intellectual feet amid the swirling waters of speculation and conjecture.

Much depends on the kind of certainty that we are seeking. If we look for something on which we can all agree, we are apt to come at last to "death and taxes" as the irreducible minimum. If our faith in God and contact with him rest upon the finding of some general way of looking at things acceptable to us all as a creed, then the case is lost before we begin. The struggle to standardize men's ideals and value-concepts through the ages has loosed the furies of hatred and intolerance among men and lighted thousands of martyr fires.

If it is merely a matter of being sure of something the best course is to adopt a few ideas and phrases and quickly close the mind to all others. Thus a man may become sure even of the book of Revelation. It is an easy method with one fatal defect; it excludes life and growth and reduces the living faith to the dry bones of a creed that has ceased to breathe. As the answers to the questions make clear, the vital thing about faith is its outreach for something ahead, first discerned through hope. Faith is the soul of the Prophet with his eyes on the unfolding future with its expanding life and better knowing of God and his eternal purposes for us and all men. The faithful performance of rites and ceremonies in the name of some past spiritual achievement does not require faith; it needs only compliance and assent, and these may become dead things in a man's life. We read with wonder of the setting up of the brazen serpent in the wilderness for the saving of a stricken people, but we forget the story in Second Kings of the act of Hezekiah, who "brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses made" and called it "Nehushtan"—a piece of brass. Once the emblem of saving power, it became lifeless metal when the people began to burn incense to it and worship the form out of which the life had gone.

At first sight faith looks like the end of cer-

tainty, but it is, rather, the beginning of a larger confidence. Where our five senses fail and reason grows dumb, faith steps in and says, "I believe!" We stake all on the thesis that certain things are true and then go ahead, and the outcome justifies our adventure. The confidence that makes a man step out without knowing just where his feet may fall is worth more as a vital assent than mathematical certainty. When a soul touches hands with God, there is no need of logic. The fact is its own demonstration. It takes courage and initiative to cut the shore lines of guaranteed formulas and head out to sea in spiritual exploration of the unknown. No man can do it unless he is sure that God is out there waiting for him. "Faith is a willingness to risk something because of a certainty." Exactly so!

There may not be much external difference between the faith of one man and that of another, but the inner difference may be very important. There is an angle of vision, a total attitude toward all things that sets one man toward the adventure of faith and turns another back in timid despair, even when both of them formally believe the same things. "It is the set of the sails and not of the gales that determines the way we go." In the end a small difference of life-angle may be infinite in its consequences.

Putting out to sea has always about it an ele-

ment of uncertainty, but so far no better way has yet been found of voyaging the great deep and reaching the farther shore. If we try to travel by air, the uncertainties are multiplied. It is venture forth, or live and die in the safe harbor. There will always be people to whom the tied-to-the-dock life will appeal on a safety-first basis. "Who am I to presume to think about great matters, settled centuries ago by authorities of the church?" asked a satisfied follower of prescribed creeds. But souls that have once tasted of the good flavor of a life in the open, alone and free with God, lose interest in the securities and monotonies of the water-front type of faith.

Nor is this all. We take for granted the benefits of free faith while we forget the blessings of a lifted life-level, the re-evaluation of all things by higher standards, the solid and unspectacular benefits that crowd into our lives, until some emergency brings us face to face with conditions that we thought we had forgotten. Listen to the outpourings of bitterness of some man who has followed the appetites of the flesh until they have gone stale and you will come to new appreciations of the peace of mind and steadiness of spirit that naturally follow a clear conscience and a healthy interest in human fellowships.

Spiritual certainty of the adventurous sort

does not bring immunity from unanswerable questions. A man with no questions to ask of the universe is only half alive, or less. There are some interrogations that will not down. What of the unsatisfied hunger for beauty, the surprising capacity for unselfishness, the frequent desire for high character-attainments, the universal problem of evil, the mystery of suffering, the haunting echoes of the vibrant heart, the worth-whileness of life's totals as contrasted with the vanity of all things under the sun? What about them all? To shut our eyes to these and other questions is to take our places beside our patient and unquestioning four-footed friends. To accept without question the traditional answers is so easy and comfortable, why not let it go at that? How can I solve the riddle of the ages? I cannot solve it, but I can register my own reactions and stretch my soul against the infinite and steadily grow in grace through it all. Many a time I have entered a ritualistic church and witnessed the imagery and ceremony and the everything-labeled-and prescribed procedure, and in moments of weakness I have wished that it might be as easy as that. But when it becomes as easy as that, something within us dies and we lose our high privilege of going out like Abram, nor know where we go, but certain in our time that we go with Him who

died for us and said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end."

The one positive answer comes through Christ. The philosophers command our respectful attention but they do not bring us much of personal comfort. The great teachers of the non-Christian faiths lead us up to a barrier of the unknown and stop there. "There is no remedy for sin," a Buddhist priest told me when I pressed him for his solution of the basic moral problem of all humanity. But Jesus stood and cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." Not technical, mechanical rules for conduct or answers to questions, but the water of life. Given that, in due time we may grow our own answers and become as sons of God.

"In him is the yes," declared Paul. The Yes to the best that we know or can conceive, the Yes to the inner urge toward goodness and truth, the positive response toward the hungry questionings of the faithful heart. When a man hears that Yes and glimpses what it may mean of fulfillment and completion for his life, he knows of a truth that he is dealing with Reality and not illusion or self-suggestion. This way is the assurance that lays hold on God and goes straight forward.

A life of faith generates a moral stability that brings its own assurance. There is a victory that

overcometh the world, even our faith, and with the triumph comes a sense of wholeness, of cleanness within, of healthful contacts with the universe. Such certainty comes from vital contacts with a Person, and Christ as a recognized Person becomes sufficient for the moral needs of life. When a man knows that he knows Christ, he does not trouble much about problems of creed and controversy.

To the before-mentioned group of missionaries was put the final question, "What are you sure of in your own consciousness?" A very few allowed their tested and reasoned convictions to crowd in upon the realizations of experience, but in the main the replies were rich in their revelation of the content of a normal Christian consciousness. Here are a few of them:

"I am sure that God loves me, that he hears and heeds my prayers, when from the heart; I am sure that God has a purpose and plan for my life, and I know that I shall be restless until I find and carry out that plan. I am sure that there is a life after this of such beauty and fullness that it cannot be described in words, but at times it may be felt."

"I know that in the world there is a Force or Power. In nature it works through such energies as gravitation, chemical affinity, electrical magnetism and such forms. In human nature it

appears as will-power, character-force, and other forms subject to direction but not measurable. In the realm of spirit this divine energy works through contacts made by prayer. In all forms there is one ultimate energy, God. I feel that nature, time, space, all things are in his hands."

"I am sure that there is a friendly God and that he cares for me, and that I can commune with him through prayer, and that God has a purpose for my life."

"I am sure that there is a power outside of myself on which I can rely. I am sure that prayer is worth while, and that following Christ brings an increase in the spirit of love; that there is no other leader whom I could follow and find the same satisfaction that I find in Christ, that the more I try to help others to know Christ, the better I understand him myself. I have learned that so-called sacrifices for Christ are investments that are immensely worth while."

"I know that at one time when about seventeen years old something happened to me that marked the birth of a new spiritual consciousness. The flame and the glory have since faded but the consciousness then begun has deepened and the memories and results of that experience still warm my heart and kindle anew the fires of spiritual energy."

"I know that flashes of vision, glimpses of

reality are intermittent and unpredictable. I know that help from without—'above'—has come to me in every major crisis of my life. I know that I find more sense of reality in the realm of spirit than in material values and interests. I know that there is a universe at hand, unseen but real, and that this unseen speaks through nature, the twilight, mountains, the stars, the sea, trees and living things."

"I know that mechanical formulas will not satisfy the inner urge for reality that will not down. I know that it is an awful thing to believe, but that it is far worse not to believe."

"I find more inspiration and satisfaction in spiritual adventure than in following the dictates of authority."

"I know that I love life and that I want to go on with it indefinitely. I find increasingly in Christ the one sufficient answer to all the questions of life, and I have come to believe that absolute honesty is the first condition of knowing the truth."

Such is the assembled evidence gathered from the spiritual consciousness of men and women who seriously, honestly, and intelligently set out to find reality through their own unselfish devotion to the good of their fellow men. Making all allowance for their incomplete findings and imperfect attainments, they were witnessing

to a satisfaction of high value and making contacts with a reality that gave them confidence and moral motive energy of the highest social value.

Hear, then, the parable of the wings. We used to sing about them and weave them into idle allegories. Now we find them a fitting symbol of the soul's reach toward reality.

Faith that lays hold on the eternal actualities is like the flight of heavier-than-air machines. It swings out on nothing visible, sustained by its own inner energies. The kingdom of Heaven likewise is within us and we have sung and prayed for the "wings of faith to rise above the veil and see. . . ." It is launch out into space or remain on the ground.

The faith that lays hold on reality is automatically self-sustaining by its own upward lift and rises heavenward without visible means of support. It is a breath-taking experience. I know a man who tried it once in the realm of speculation and he reported afterward that he came to where he could look down and there was nothing beneath to bear him up. In consternation he turned back to prescribed formulas and set ceremonies, guaranteed to work under all conditions. If Columbus and Vasco da Gama and Magellan had been men of this mold, we might still be living on a flat earth.

A curious thing about air navigation is that if we go at it with power and speed enough, the thin air becomes "solid" and bears us up with all safety at velocities unknown and impossible on the earth. Just this happens with the flight of faith. Faith looks difficult and dangerous for the weak souls that cannot get off the ground. The dangerous part of flying is the starting and stopping. When our spirits step off into the unknown with confidence enough in the God of the infinite spaces and mysterious realms of the eternal energies, we find that we are more than merely out of danger; we are launched into a new universe with possibilities undreamed of on the lower levels of authoritative certainty.

XVI

PUTTING FAITH INTO PRACTICE

"It seems real enough while you are talking about it, but when I go away and try to find it by myself, faith becomes faint and far away," complained a friend, and he voiced a feeling of many people.

In practice, we come at this point to several well-tested measures. If it be objected that we cannot all be spiritually minded, we reply that it depends on what we mean by that much abused term. We cannot all become experts or share the unique visions of Saint John or Santa Theresa, but we can each run up our own aerial, tune in on the Infinite, and get whatever our ears can hear of the word of life. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear," what he can. This sounds very well indeed, but how am I to do it?

Jesus put it concretely and said, several times, that whatever we might ask "in my name," we would receive. We usually add some phrase like that to our prayers, but we secretly feel that there is some catch about it, and in practice we do not ask things that we have no hope of re-

ceiving. We hold off and do not try it out. Just what does it mean?

In four statements the promise is directly related to "fruit-bearing." We are to bear much fruit, our fruit shall remain, and in relation to the fruitfulness of life, as related to Him, we may ask what we will, in his name, and it shall be granted unto us. Our lives are not to be barren or unfruitful, but in a large way dependent upon our courage to follow Him, we are to accomplish great things.

There is no high mystery in this. A name is a word representing a person, place, or thing and stands for what it represents. In his name, taken very simply, means in his place, his person, his relation to the Father; standing there, in the same relation to God as he sustained, praying as he prayed, we might ask what we will. When we pray that way, the Spirit maketh intercession with and for us and likewise prevents us from asking what may not be in the divine will for us. When we pray in the Spirit, there are things that we cannot ask and there are other things that we can ask with the assurance that they are to be ours, are already ours, in fact, "before ye ask." All sense of distance and strangeness departs and we believe with great joy at seeing Him who is invisible. Jesus himself in Gethsemane met his conflict with the

impossible and could not ask outright something outside the eternal purpose of the Father.

The moments when we can ask what we will do not come every day, but they do come at intervals, and the intervening time is not lost if occupied with a normal walk with God, be the going rough or smooth. There is a development of constant spiritual consciousness that becomes the background of our lives, whether we spend much or little time in audible prayer.

There is a practical mysticism that solves the problem for most of us. None of us are going back to the monasteries and few of us are to receive special revelations. We need a practical working method by which ordinary, everyday, average people may come to a wholesome realization of the reality of things divine in their own lives. There must be, and there is, such a light for every man. It is found by making a definite business of our devotional lives. One of the modern explorers of religious experience says that any man who really wants to do so can solve the problem, provided he has the courage to set up an altar somewhere in his house and make it a place of daily prayer and confession and communion and thanksgiving.

The principle of this prescription is sound. Open, fearless devotion, accepting the while its moral implications, has made valiant men in all

ages. Three times a day Daniel knelt before his open east window and in sight of all men, prayed to the God of his fathers. Does some one say that was all right for Daniel, a "Bible man," but for me, is a different matter? The difference is that it would be far less dangerous for me than it was for Daniel. The final difference is between the kind of man Daniel was and the kind I am. I wouldn't do that in my front room, with the window open onto the street, when everybody was going by to work, not for anything, and there is no one to throw me to the lions if I did. But they said about Daniel "Thy God whom thou servest *continually*," regardless of everything else.

Dean Inge is reported to have remarked that if we spend five minutes per day on the things of the Spirit and the rest of the time on other things, it is not strange if we attain one hundred and ninety-two times as much success in one realm as we do in the other. The only effective way yet devised for breaking through the wall of unreality that cuts us off from more definite realization of things divine is to set everything else aside at times and do that and nothing else. The way to hold effective communion with God is to hold communion with God until it becomes effective. We shall never make much headway in the things of the Spirit so long as we do every-

thing else first. It is not hard to understand why our lives are weakest on their spiritual side. Any other side would be weak if treated the same way. There is a marvelous vitality about our spirits that survives and defies the most atrocious neglect and abuse.

The remedy is not in turning recluse or neglecting other matters of value. Fifteen minutes per day of concentrated attention to the things of the Spirit will change this weak side into a new source of power. We will not object to giving the fifteen minutes, but to make them count may not be so easy. There is nothing harder to do than to hold one's mind steadily on God for any length of time, and there is nothing else that will yield anything like a large return on the investment. Even a little seed of devotion, if regularly tended, will yield a surprising harvest of peace and deepening consciousness of the presence of God in our lives.

The gist of the matter, in parable terms, is found in an ancient story. A certain "great woman," together with her little-mentioned husband, noted that a prophet of the Lord frequently passed that way and, for his comfort and convenience, built a guest room and furnished it simply but adequately, and when the traveler came that way thereafter, he tarried with them and brought blessings with him.

Later on, when the dark hour fell upon that family, the same prophet brought life and joy to the afflicted household.

The cost of the guest chamber might have been put to other uses, or the room might have been used as a granary or put to hire. There is an expense item connected with keeping empty rooms waiting for passing prophets. It costs something to make and keep a place in our lives for the spiritual visitants that we so greatly desire but so often miss because when they do come we are busy here and there and have no place prepared for them. Spiritual riches, it seems, come to those who make ready in advance for them, even at some expense.

The upper room became the saving factor in the situation. So may it be with us if we keep a place in our lives for the coming of the Spirit. We need a prophet's chamber of devotion if we are to realize the presence of the heavenly guest, not merely in the guest-chamber but in all the house. The waiting upper room has power to change the spirit and life of all the house.

We have heard much about the basements of our beings, with their survivals of primitive instincts and what-not that prowl about the dark corners and sometimes break through into the living rooms on the main floor. There is also an upper room of the spirit, with a skylight opening

upward through which the sun of heaven shines with light and life and sanity. If we keep the skylight clean and the door open, there will be light in all the house and that will end the danger of inroads from the basement. The one thing that the animals in the cellar cannot stand is light.

XVII

GOING ON

Somebody wrote a parable about his mule that ran away when he should have stood still, balked when he ought to have moved, loafed all day, and at bedtime suddenly started off in wrong directions and generally made a nuisance of himself. Many more of us might describe our minds in similar terms, for we all have our mental mules to manage, if we can.

It is not easy to hold our minds to steady effort of any kind. There are so many bypaths that run off to interesting-looking places. We exhort ourselves, whip our faculties, resolve and re-resolve to stick to it this time or die in the attempt. All goes well for a time, then something slips and we are off the track, skidding again. This is not a matter of natural rhythm mentioned elsewhere, but of something more insidious—the very human tendency to make a new start, slow up, and settle back, to lose interest again in the things of the Spirit. We try it, find it difficult and give it up. Who has not suffered from this pull-back into the old channel, always deeper than the groove of the new purpose?

Jesus said some plain things about people who set out boldly and then turn back, about people who learn to repeat pious phrases and then forget to match up their lives with their words. "If thine eye be single," he said, not one-eyed but sincere of purpose, there will be clear vision and the "whole body will be full of light." Men with single motives and sincere purposes do not find their hearts dark within nor do they stumble over their own disappointments or other people's shortcomings. The worst penalty for playing a double game is that it brings inability to see straight on a moral issue. Men who hold no mental reservations are largely free from the back-pull of the old way. There is moral power in simplicity of motive.

We learn to eliminate the superfluous things as the years go by. Paul steadily decreased his range of interests as he grew older and came to know how very few things a man can really do in the space of a human life. By narrowing his range Paul greatly increased his depth and intensity. "The love of Christ constraineth me," he declared, put him under pressure, raised his voltage, harnessed his scattered forces, and made him doubly effective within new boundaries. There is a narrowing focus of life that restricts the field of view but wonderfully clears the vision of what is seen. Secondary matters fade and the

great central issues come to their own first place in the scale of values.

Jesus has the last word in this matter of focus and persistence, as we might expect. It is one of those complete sayings that cannot be changed without weakening its value. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." If you really want to find God, to make contacts with things of the Spirit, then make the effort, go at it in earnest, ask, seek, knock, do the works of God, pay the price, count the cost and go ahead. This has a most wholesome sound, and we are assured that if we do take it seriously and make the effort, we shall enter in and find. For is not God, our heavenly Father, more willing to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask than we fallible and often fickle parents are to give good gifts to our children!

There is more than this in the saying. Ask, seek, knock are not synonyms. They are progressive steps in a process of spiritual advance. There are three types of seekers and three stages in the search of anyone who goes all the way.

Ask. Make your requests known unto God. Tell him your needs. Many of us would never come at all if our needs did not bring us. Our necessities become the basis of our approach to God, and we well may sing, "Blest be the tem-

pest, kind the storm that drives us nearer home." On the surface intercession is a direct asking for something. Better, far better come begging than not come at all, but it is a pity that asking for something at the throne of grace is as far as some of us ever get in our relations to God. This is very well as an initial step, but we need to go further. We are encouraged to come and bring our needs with us, for are they not all known in advance of our asking? But the act of asking has a great effect in clearing our own minds and brings new and divine perspective to bear upon our wants and wishes. We see all things more clearly after we talk them over with God in prayer. If prayer were simply this and nothing more, it would be still the most profitable act of a man's personality. Ask, then, ask that your joy may be full, ask that ye may receive, ask and ye shall know the value of your petitions.

Seek. Here is a larger word dealing with a different range of values. Seekers after truth we ought to be and in a different measure from our asking for the things we need. Seekers after truth, we must in some sense be, the unfolding eternal truth that opens ever greater as our vision clears and our depth increases. The truth that measures the relation of outer reality to inner understanding is always "greater than the facts." For this we are to seek, regardless

of what others may find and prescribe, and this seeking for better understanding of the eternal verities may well become the ruling passion of our lives. Nor need we despair of finding. The things of the Spirit are often withheld from the wise and prudent, the schemers and managers of things and men, and revealed to the simple and contrite heart. Babes in Christ have their promises too, and most normal children spend a lot of time in prying into the why of things.

In seeking to know, we find a remedy for much of the tendency to ask, and, having received, let it go at that and lose interest. If we are to follow on, we will have to go beyond the asking stage and begin to seek for things deeper down than those to be had for the asking. The attainment of spiritual understanding is a profounder process than the bestowing of gifts.

If every man is to go about prying into the secrets of the universe, how are we to secure uniformity of thinking? But Jesus never said that uniformity was essential or even desirable in anything except some very central facts and principles. He did place great emphasis on such major things as love, obedience, trust in God, service to one's neighbor, mercy, justice, truth. Paul had it, "To each of us individually, his grace was given." How wide may be the di-

versity of gifts, Paul well knew and clearly stated: Many gifts but the same Spirit. Whole-hearted seeking after some insight into God's ways of doing things serves as an effective anti-dote for the back-pull of the day's work and the social interests that so crowd us about at times that we forget our hour of devotion.

Directed reading may be a great help to this process of seeking after understanding of things divine. One might with profit set up a standard something like this:—Read every year one good book on philosophy, one on history, and one on psychology, with one on some phase of the person or ministry or teaching of Jesus, and perhaps one of the practical programs of the church in the modern world. If we do this, we shall not fail to attain a better understanding of the meaning of the kingdom of heaven that Jesus talked about and set up among men.

Knock. What is this? Knocking implies something hidden, closed, locked. We may assume that the treasures are hidden, after the human fashion, but it well may be that we are mistaken and that it is we ourselves who are locked in upon our own ignorance and blindness and need to knock that our doors may be opened outward into the unlimited fullness of His abundant purpose to usward. Paul now and then breaks into speech that indicates that he was

dealing with an overflowing abundance beyond the limits of our narrow lives. There are uncharted realms of light and life and energy on the margins of which we live our little lives while the whirling spheres go by us all unnoticed. Knock and it shall be opened, and we may yet go forth from our prison cells and know the freedom of spiritual adventure with that Eternal Reality that Jesus said we might call "Our Father." It is not given to all men to gaze on the unseeable, but to each in his full measure is promised fellowship with the Father and we will have to get out of prison before we can attain it. We can knock persistently at the barriers of our lives and know that if we persevere it shall be opened unto us.

Asking, seeking, knocking; the outreach of the will, the search of the mind, the longing of the heart. We cannot divide ourselves into separate compartments of personality, we know that, but the whole man does ask, and seek and knock and so comes to enrichment of experience and strength of character. All three kinds of following after God are needed in the life of every man.

What earnest men want to know is God's purpose for their lives. Once that is understood and accepted, life revolves about a new center; old things give way to new. For most of us the will of God needs a new revelation almost every day.

The daily contact becomes the test by which we check up and know where we now stand.

"Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord." "If anyone is willing to do His will, he shall know about the teaching." Ask, seek, knock, and we shall receive; not seize nor earn nor merit, but in our deepest consciousness receive directly the kingdom of God.

XVIII

WITH WHOM WE HAVE TO DO

WHAT are we to make of such words as infinite, eternal, everlasting, absolute? If one thinks, even a little, the very simple thesis that space has no limits becomes inconceivable and self-contradictory. We try to follow the time-space-distance terms of the astronomers, only to give it up, dizzy and bewildered. Clearly we are dealing with something "beyond the present focus of our minds."

If we try to get a mental concept of God, we are in still greater trouble. As the Creator of the universe he must be greater than his works, and we instinctively feel that he must be, not merely greater than ourselves but of a distinctly different order of being. There is something in God for which we have no terms of understanding. We mortals complain of distraction if more than two people talk to us at once, yet we try to imagine God as listening to millions of people addressing him at the same time with their petitions. We like to think that "prayer changes things," but when we remember the vastness of creation and the infinitesimal part of it

that any one of us makes up, we stand aghast at the idea that a human being should presume to make any suggestion whatever to God. The problem comes in some form to every thinking intelligence. What are we to do?

Over against this dilemma of the mind we set up two facts, as incontestable as those just mentioned. First, there is the experimental test known to every man in his best hours. In our times of need we have consciously received help in some way related to our requests. "I called on the Lord and he heard me," proclaimed the seer of old, and that testimony has been repeated in some form in every age, including our own. "The Lord blessed me there," maintained Jacob in positive mood, setting a stake of known fact from which to triangulate the waste places of his life. Such experiences, woven into the fiber of consciousness, have high evidential value.

The second fact that rises up to meet our perplexity is that Jesus Christ, who knew more about this realm of mystery than any other being of whom we know anything, and who spoke with self-attesting confidence of God and his attitude toward men, told us that we are to make our requests known unto our Father in heaven with the full assurance that we shall be heard and kindly dealt with. We are to pray, "after this manner," asking for daily bread and forgiveness

and inspiration and deliverance from temptation. Further than this, he tells us that God knows our minutest needs and that he takes a personal interest in all that happens to us.

We cannot get away from the conviction that Jesus meant what he said, and we believe that he knew what he was talking about. How, then, are we to reconcile this loving, personal, interested Father of Jesus with the only Creator-God that our minds can conceive, a Being either so great as to be beyond our range or so limited as to be inaccessible to all of us at once?

We accomplish nothing by shutting our eyes to the question and "taking it on faith." Our very intuitions tell us that God must necessarily belong to a higher order of consciousness than ourselves. Minerals, plants, animals, man, God. The order is at least natural and to that degree, understandable. There is nothing to hinder a superior intelligence from taking an interest in one of lower degree and doing things wholly impossible for lesser creatures.

So far, so good; but why does God leave us so much in the dark, and why does he not reveal himself and his purposes more clearly to men? The answer is not far to seek. Why does not a man reveal himself and his intentions more fully to his faithful dog? Try as we may, the dog cannot understand us. Every man must be

a strange and incomprehensible creature to his dog. Doubtless God is doing all that infinite love and good will can do to say to us as much as our childish understanding can contain, which is little enough—that we well know. Nor can we explain ourselves and our plans even to our children, created in our own image. Youth is dumb before childhood, and maturity invariably is in trouble trying to communicate with youth.

Some things we do know. There is out beyond our reach a vast physical universe of whose limits we know nothing, but we know that it is there. There is a yet vaster universe of life and spirit and intelligence, and it breaks through into our consciousness at times and comes close to us.

There come to us mysterious vibrations from out there that set our hearts a-quiver with expectation. We know, we know something, even though what we know we know not, as yet. We are assured that we shall know more fully when we attain unto a better measure of that spiritual consciousness in which we believe, that we shall at last see clearly face to face, and not through a dark glass as now.

We admit that some men have made better contacts with this universe unseen than we have been able to do. The astronomers and mathe-

maticians have gone far out into space, and the spiritual experts have entered within the veil and have tried to tell us of what they saw there. But what of us; is there no voice nor vision for our restless hearts?

There is. We begin our journey toward satisfaction by conceding that God is a Person, "pure Personality" if you will, but Person and not impersonal Force. Since no human person can attend to innumerable items at the same time, God must be personality and intelligence in a different mode and of a higher order than anything of which we know in human terms. Evidently, he so far transcends us that we have no consciousness that corresponds to his, though his infinite knowing may easily include all there is of us. "Pure personality" sounds well, but how am I to deal with such a being? I am baffled, not so much by the greatness and majesty of God as by my own hopeless inability to deal with such a God in any intelligent and practical way. How real and general is this feeling, the witnesses everywhere attest. "God dwelleth in light that no man can approach unto." "Whom no man has ever seen, nor can see." "Clouds and darkness are round about him." "The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity." Countless expressions of similar import come to us across the centuries and from the

life of our own time. How are we to deal with a God like that?

Notwthstanding this majesty-and-power concept of God which we all accept as far as it goes, there are multitudes of people who have in mind quite a different God to whom they may address their petitions, confess their sins, and from whom they receive help in time of trouble. A very little inquiry into the matter reveals the startling fact that not all these people are talking to the same God, or at least the same idea of God. There are currents of ideas of God that would outdo in cruelty and vengeance the terrors of the inquisitors. There are people whose God is too weak to do more than smile upon them and others who think that their God has nothing to do but look after their own little personal interests. We each do create our God, and these gods bear a striking resemblance to a photo-enlargement of our own idealized selves. Sometimes it looks as if there were about as many gods as worshipers.

Unsatisfactory as this is, we have universal testimony that results come back to us from Him to whom we address our petitions, varied and imperfect as may be our diverse personal concepts regarding him. Admit that we are each of us worshiping the best that we know and call that God, it must be that through this imperfect

image we are somehow touching also the same Ultimate Reality that Jesus called our Father. The very greatest God that I can conceive must at best be an infinitesimal fraction of the Absolute Creator of all things and men, but through and by means of my little, cramped concept of God, he himself, infinite and eternal, marvelous in mercy and goodness and truth, does deal directly with me and becomes the highest possible value and character concept recognizable in my life.

It comes to this. The Infinite and unknowable Fullness of God pours out to every man as much of himself as the little individual, human cup can contain. My poor little thought of God becomes his own manifestation of himself to me and though it is with my own idea-of-God that I am dealing, through that I do come to some sort of contact with Infinite Reality. I can make little of the vast unknowable, infinite All-in-All, "I am that I am," who dwells in unapproachable splendor and light. But I can listen to Jesus talk about our Father and be confident that if my little idea of God is the best I can conceive, then that God will meet me on this level and reveal himself through my heart's image of him. My little checks are cashed at sight at the bank of Infinity. God has no limited number of manifestations and there is one apiece all around. My little God will grow greater as my under-

standing of and acquaintance with him increases, and that means infinite extension beyond the here and now. Thus does faith, which lays hold boldly of the highest I can conceive, become life's greatest and most glorious adventure.

As to the idea that this God is but the screen-projection of my best ideal there is small difficulty, on the pragmatic side. This God I know is vastly better and greater than anything else I can conceive, and none of my other high ideals work with any such potency in my life. My other projections are of a different order and mode of being. Through my groping in the dark, God in some way comes to me, and while I may see him but dimly and understand only a part of what he is saying to me, nevertheless the little that I do get lifts my life and brings me to the threshold of a new level of consciousness. This is the God whose presence I cultivate daily with so much of profit and whom I seek just for the sake of knowing as much as I can of him. I want to live as near him as possible, that he may say to me what he will at any moment when I am ready to hear. That I cannot describe him very clearly to you is no more strange than that I am unable to tell you just what the Hallelujah Chorus says to me, or how I feel about a tropical sunset of the Royal George. I cannot even tell you how I feel about my family, but if you have a good wife and

loyal children, you will understand without my saying much about it.

This little idea of God that I have has infinite possibilities of growth. That I am painfully limited just now in my concept has no permanent significance. My Idea and I will grow together, in the increasing clearness of that Light that lighteth every man. God translates himself, reduces his vast unknowableness, dims the brightness of his glory, adapts his language to approachable and understandable expression, cuts himself down to where I can in some measure begin to understand him. He did so with the Israelites of old and he meets my crudeness too. In this sense God becomes self-limiting, taking on himself my limits, the feeling of my infirmities, and the boundaries of my ignorance. "Amazing condescension," we may well exclaim, for God is individualizing himself to every human being. "To each a manifestation of the Spirit has been granted," wrote Paul, and then significantly added, "for the common good." Through the closing words of the Gospels and the stirring events of the Acts shines the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the individual manifestation of God to every man. That God ever cuts himself off from any man we cannot believe. That a man may cut himself off from God we too well know. That the savage, bowing before

his image of wood or stone, may be worshiping his own idea of that same God whom I also imperfectly adore in my own mode and concept, who shall deny? Certainly not Paul.

We have an objective standard by which to check up this inner concept of God, for this same God was "manifested in the Flesh and we beheld his glory. . . . full of grace and truth." Here we are on solid ground, dealing with a historical person incontestibly certified by good witnesses and far-reaching results explainable on no other grounds than that Jesus lived, died, and rose for our redemption. Here is our external "control" by which to test the inner results of the spirit given to every man to profit withal. If we keep close to Christ, we shall not go very far astray in our search for a better idea of God. "I am the Way." When a man finds the Way and enters therein, he makes progress and comes to the Truth, and when he knows the Truth and follows it, he receives Life. He who follows his own best inner idea of God and keeps close to Christ will find Christ and the inner image merging into the highest possible approximation to our Father who is in Heaven and who dwells with his children.

There is a necessary divine co-ordination of these two revelations of God, the Word spoken through Christ and the Spirit manifested in me.

"When the spirit of truth comes, . . . he will take what is mine and communicate it to you," said Jesus. God becomes his own self-interpreter, through the things of Christ. If a man knows little or nothing of Christ and takes no pains to learn, how is he to avoid wandering in the wilderness of wild fancies and vain imaginations?

"Does any man worship the true God?" a thoughtful friend asked me years ago. I thought that he was talking religious anarchy and I had no answer then. I am ready for him now. Any man may worship as much of the true God as he can comprehend in Christ Jesus, and conceive in his own conscious response to the highest ideal of God that he can know.

XIX

I AM THE DOOR

PROBABLY there is as much authority-seeking to-day as there ever was, and probably there will always be people who honestly look for some final answer for the eternal interrogation of the human heart. Most of us feel we must find a final reference outside ourselves. Thus has served the "perfect law" of Moses and the prophets. The mediæval infallible church, the one inerrant Book, the hard-and-fast limits of dogma, and the last court of private judgment have all eased the strains of lonely minds in their personal approach to the riddle of the universe. Unless the ship of faith can find some chart and compass through the unknown, it is lost at sea with all hands on board.

In practice, all of these ultimates fail of completeness. Partial expressions of all truth they undoubtedly are, each within its own limits, but none of them has yet declared all that there is in God. Why not, then, go directly to God himself for our answers? Many of us do this, insofar as we are able, but we have come to feel, with the

ancient Greek philosophers, that going to God directly is a rather large undertaking for man's fitful and faulty reach. God is speaking, but our ears are dull and the span of human life is all too short for any adequate discovery of the Infinite. Whether he borrowed it from Philo or not, John's figure of the intermediary Word meets a necessity of our natures. In the depths of us and in our whole approach to the Infinite we need an Interpreter, an Intercessor, a go-between to bring us to God. For this purpose was "God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself."

When materialism would drown the voice of the Spirit with the clamor of things, and intelligent faith began to reach out for reality, it was inevitable that some should raise the cry, "Back to Christ." Most of us instinctively feel that in Christ, and in Christ alone, we have the remedy for every situation.

Any effective movement toward Christ will not be backward, but very decidedly and very far forward. We know from experience that the whole wooden-image, magic-and-mystery approach of the Roman Church has some serious defects as a means of attaining spiritual reality. The highly organized and all-prescribed routine of prepared devotions may have spiritual values, but it is not that direct fellowship with the Father that Jesus

himself maintained and commended to his followers. Nor are we to be too severe with the followers of sacramentalism. The rest of us, with our casual acceptance of Christ as a Someone or Somewhat above and beyond us, to be acknowledged as a Divine Ideal and then forgotten till another Sunday or calamity comes around, have little cause to sit in the seat of the scornful.

Every serious man comes to face the old question, "What think ye of Christ?" Every man's answer must be decisive for himself. It makes an infinite difference whether Christ is a tradition or a contemporary Personality. What does he mean to me? Is he a myth, invented by men who prepared a hoax for the unsuspecting? Is he a tradition, built up through centuries of earnest but credulous admiration? Is he an ecclesiastical convenience for the spiritual control of ignorant multitudes? Is he a historical man of high moral character? Is he the world's greatest teacher? Is he the one complete, ideal human character? Is he God's thought of man-at-his-best? Is he God's sample of himself, reduced to human and understandable terms? Is he all and in all something more than any man can ever become? Is he a teacher, a mystic, a martyr, or is he the Divine Redeemer of mankind?

We have had a plenty of speculation and con-

jecture. At least, our small and varying opinions are but surmises at the truth, as much of it as we can guess at? Why not ask Christ himself what he proposes to do for us and then ask ourselves whether he has done it! This determination of who and what is Christ is at last a matter of trial and error. His claims are definite, positive, and universal, and so unique are his character and message that common consent has ever allowed him to attest his own ministry. He not only knew what was in man but understood the content of his own consciousness and the import of his own message so much better than any human attempt to analyze him, that we silence our stammering tongues and listen to his own words of life.

It comes to this: is Christ a reality in my consciousness or is he a lay figure of tradition? All other questions fall on one side or the other of this division line.

It is not difficult to find what Christ thought of himself, of his ministry, his message, his program for mankind. For the abstruse profundities of the philosophers he substituted the plain speech of the common people; so very simple are some of his profoundest statements that we slip over the top of them and miss the infinite depths below.

Christ proposed himself as the final and com-

plete answer to the restlessness of the human heart. Everywhere he met burdened men and went straight to the basic problems of their lives and set them at rest. The blind received sight, the lame walked, the lepers were cleansed, the deaf heard, the dead were raised to life, and the poor had the gospel preached unto them. The sick of the palsy had his sins forgiven, the lowly were exalted, the weak in the faith were given assurance and a few humble men were sent forth endued with power from on high to set up a kingdom of righteousness in a perverse generation.

The recorded words of Jesus are simple and direct. "Ye shall find rest unto your souls." "Whoever is thirsty," He said, "let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, from within him, as the Scripture has said, rivers of living water shall flow."

"I am the door. If any one enters by me, he will find safety, and will go in and out and find pasture."

"If then the Son shall make you free you will be free indeed."

"Whatsover any of you ask in my name, I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."

"In truth I say unto you that he who trusts in me shall do the deeds that I do, and he shall do greater deeds because I go to the Father."

When Philip came saying, "Show us the Father!" he was told that "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." And to Nicodemus he spoke the assuring word that "whosoever believed on the Son should not perish, but have eternal life." To the crowds that followed him across the lake he said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." All through the records appear his assurances of comfort and power and light for discouraged men. For every man he has an abundance of the lacking elements in his unbalanced character. For the disturbed heart and the unblessed life he has the remedy.

The old-fashioned personal testimonies, now so nearly forgotten that we almost need to put them in quotation marks, dealt with what Christ was to and did for the witnesses who spoke "a word for Jesus." Christ "was precious," "Christ has done great things for my soul," "Christ is everything to me," "Christ is my friend," a "constant help in trouble," Christ saved "in the midst of temptation," Christ was a "Saviour, Redeemer, and coming King."

We are beginning to hear testimonies in a somewhat different key, but none the less sincere. Effective witnesses must always speak in the language of their listeners. The old phrases may

be passing, but we are hearing sincere statements of what Christ means and does and is and offers and in terms that stir our hearts and grip our imaginations. More vivid and insistent than ever the challenge is coming to every man, "Just what does Christ mean to and do for you?"

There are six things, at least six major things, that Jesus definitely offers to those who sincerely follow him in his way of life. To claim that his words were limited to the immediate circle of his contemporary hearers is wholly to miss the total purpose of his life and ministry. If Christ was anything he was universal, as events have proven for nineteen hundred years. Here is his proposal for the cure of restlessness and the attainment of reality.

To distracted and overburdened men Christ promised *peace*, a peace that included rest of mind. "Peace I leave with you; my own peace I give to you. It is not as the world gives its greetings that I give you peace. Let not your hearts be troubled, or dismayed." "Come unto me, *all* ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Ye shall find rest unto your souls." "I have spoken all this to you in order that in me you may have peace. In the world you have affliction. But keep up your courage: I have won the victory over the world."

To gloom-bound hearts, oppressed by the drab monotony of routine existence, Christ promised to give *joy*. "These things I have spoken to you in order that I may have joy in you, and that your joy may become perfect." "Ask, and you shall receive, that your hearts may be filled with gladness." "I shall see you again, and your hearts will be glad, and your gladness no one will take away from you." Rejoice, rejoice, rejoice, runs through the gospel like the undertone of the surf on the shores of our lives. Probably no one will make bold to deny that the religion of Jesus is one of joy and gladness.

To the starved spirits of men caught in a meager existence Jesus promised an *abundant life*. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." "Of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace," said John. All power is given unto him and through him to us according to our several needs. If we go hungry, it is not because of any lack on his part.

To under-energized men, struggling against the heavy odds of life, Jesus promised *power*. Not only is all power given unto him, but he said to his disciples, "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." Other teachers have offered attractive ethics and worthy

moral maxims, but Jesus alone has revealed and promised a sufficient moral dynamic to make his program effective in experience. Final success or failure on the upward way will depend on the presence or absence of a driving force sufficient to make our ideals operative.

To lonely lives in a sometimes not-too-friendly world, Jesus promised *fellowship.* "No longer do I call you servants, because a servant does not know what his master is doing, but I have called you friends, because all that I have heard from the Father I have made known to you." "I am with you alway, even unto the end." "That where I am, there ye may be also."

To men groping in the confusion of varying and conflicting purposes and ideals, Jesus promised *certainty.* "If anyone is willing to do His will, he shall know about the teaching, whether it is from God." "To you it is given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven," he said to his disciples. "For the present you shall not know, but afterwards you shall know." If there is any outstanding feature of Pentecost and after, it is that these followers of Christ were sure of something and that because of their basis of certainty they took enormous risks.

It would be easy to multiply illustrations of Jesus' proposal to round out and complete the

imperfect lives of men. If a man has received peace, joy, abundant life, power, fellowship, and certainty, he is not going to be found very far from the kingdom of reality in experience. And Jesus proposes that if a man will meet the conditions, enter upon the Way, and follow him, he shall receive just these qualities in his experience.

When a man talks like that, either he knows what he is saying with all its implications, or, as has often been pointed out, he is an impostor. All idea of an invented Christ or an imagined gospel falls flat before the hard fact that no man has yet appeared capable of conceiving a character like Christ or evolving a message like the Sermon on the Mount. Either we have to take Christ at his own terms or seek for another. Well may we exclaim with Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go?"

But taking Christ on his own terms becomes a matter of personal experience. If he can do and does do what he has offered, then we come to a final and self-attesting certainty that makes a man to know because he knows that he knows in his own inner consciousness the peace, joy, abundance, energy, fellowship, and certainty that bring him to contacts with reality and to John's triumphal declaration, "Behold what

manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." And *"that is what we are."*

Here, then, is what we have been seeking, and we find it, at last, in a Person. Jesus himself is Reality, and he that hath the Son hath Certainty. Looking about for reality in the abstract is like seeking impersonal and detached love. If I am going to experience love, it will have to be love for some person or persons and reality, like love, is directly personal. Being personal it is social, not to be attained by sitting in silent thumb-gazing, but in conscious fellowship with Him in whom all fullness dwells. In Christ I shall find my satisfying portion, my completeness, my own contact with the Name above every name until I too come to the fullness of the knowledge of the Son of God, to the stature of a full-grown man in Christ. If we have been wandering about in search of some abstract satisfaction and gaining only occasional glimpses of completeness, then it is time to come directly to Christ and learn definitely what he offers to do for us.

In point of actual realization, few men know very much about Christ and fewer still know him. Most of us can repeat the creed, if someone leads off, and we have a general idea that it is important that we insist rather positively on his di-

vinity, his virgin birth, his "one substance with God the Father," his miracles, his atoning death, resurrection and ascension. At some time someone has challenged one or more of these credal statements, and we feel a sense of merit when we rush to their defense. We are very orthodox and loyal, especially on Sunday or when someone is attacking the traditional formulas of faith or when we find ourselves in a majority with a good leader at our head.

But defending our dogmas, talking of Christ crucified, repeating in various forms the "Lord, Lord" of our day will bring us no nearer in experience to the essential Christ than when we first believed. It may even separate us from the love of Christ and leave us far from his spirit and the sacrificial service of men.

How, then, are we to come to know Christ in person and find in him that reality for which our hearts long?

First of all, we need to know vastly more about him than most of us yet have learned. Our actual information is very meager at best. Even if we could repeat the Gospels and Paul's statements from memory, we might still be far from an understanding of his message and knowledge of his character. Years of study will not exhaust the depths of his declarations, and to know his

attitude toward life and its issues we may well major for a lifetime on his proposals for mankind. We can well make ourselves specialists in the things of Christ, saturate our souls and minds with his principles until we can think his thoughts and see life as he saw it in its wholeness and final significance. Such knowledge is not to be gained in a day or a month, but a beginning may be made at once, and every step of the way adds new riches to the result.

Some essential things may be known at the outset. There is no need to wait till old age to know that Christ demands our unreserved loyalty to himself and his teachings, if we wish to know the truth that is to make us free. That few people have understood how radical and revolutionary are his words merely means that not many have taken Christ seriously. There comes a deliberated, meditated act of will by which a man definitely accepts Christ and comes to Paul's formula, "For me to live is Christ." From that on it is a matter of walking in his way, and making every honest effort to know the mind that was in Christ and to attain something of his spirit. When we reach the point of endeavor we are not far from reality.

The point of contact between Christ and the reality of spirit that we seek is in this—that the

whole program and purpose and message of Christ break through into another and vaster realm of existence than the things that are seen and heard, or known by rational processes. Browning, in "A Death in the Desert," sang of three souls: One is the body reaching up and linking with the mind, which in turn reaches on upward and joins with the spirit, while the spirit reaches downward and lifts the whole life to consciousnearnesstoGod. "What Does, what Knows, what Is; three souls, one man." On the level of this third soul Jesus links us with life in its infinite extensions and here experience attains a certainty unknown on lower levels. "The words that I speak unto you, they are the spirit and they are life." If the word to Nicodemus means anything, it means that this third soul-level has to be born into by attainment of a new spiritual consciousness that connects with the self-attesting evidences of the kingdom of reality. No man could invent a Christ; because without Christ no man could make effective contacts with the realm of spirit from which his energies and spirit and methods and purposes come. These experiences are born into, not made up. To invent the Sermon on the Mount a man would have to come from and draw upon and find his references in the same realm of ultimate spiritual actuality

that gave us Christ. And Christ himself, in his own words, is the "Door" to this universe beyond the things that are seen. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," and his new consciousness is directly related to a transcendent realization of God, in Christ.

When a man asks me, "Do you believe in Christ?" I am always tempted to ask him what he means by his question. It is well worth any man's while to go over his own case and set down in definite terms what Christ means to him and how much Christ has actually done for him, and having done that, set out to realize for himself the fullness of Him who is all in all, blessed forevermore. Who of us does not know in his inmost self that there are yet untold riches in Christ Jesus awaiting his attainment in closer realizations of that reality that *is* Christ, as Christ is God!

Is there, then, a finding at last of peace of mind and rest of heart in this present world, regardless of condition and circumstance? May anyone, anywhere, come to know the victory over restlessness, and to possess such contacts with reality as bring calm assurance of spirit, regardless of external distractions?

There is an attainable peace of mastered passion, a dynamic quiet of energies under con-

trol, a calm of surrendered selfishness. Whether it comes early or late in life, its presence leaves an unmistakable record on the face of its possessor. "If you are not fair to look upon at twenty, it is not your fault; if you are homely at seventy, you are yourself to blame."

We can find them, if we look for them, these men and women who have mastered life and entered into the peace of God. They do not talk much about it, these restful souls, but their faces tell the story of their overcoming. I know a little old woman, bent and bowed and wrinkled and beautiful as an angel, with the inner radiance of those who have found peace. I know an old man whose years have been full of cares and undeserved trials, but the moment I look at him I know that he has left his restlessness afar and dwells in the peace of his Beulah land. Not that this overcoming is confined to old age. There are middle-aged people and young men and women who know the quiet strength that changes our restlessness for his rest.

There are countenances that say to us, "I am making a great effort and I hope to win." There are others that say nothing of their effort, but much about the victory that overcometh the world. There are people whose attitude toward life unconsciously tells us that they have met and

mastered. We seek them out and when we are with them strength comes out to meet us. Their faces do not speak of struggle but of mastery and power. In the long run, the way people look and act is the way they live, which is why old people have more expressive faces than the young.

No man can attain peace of heart unless he feels at home with God. And why are we so ill at ease and can think of nothing to say when we try to talk to him alone? For the same reason that we find it hard to talk to people whom we do not know. There are no common interests, and the conversation slips down into conventional phrases about nothing in particular, like our prayers. When we come to common ground with God, when every interest and purpose of our lives are a mutual affair between him and us, then talking with God becomes as easy and natural as an exchange of confidences with our most intimate friend.

When we come at last to our own Delectable Mountains and find there our sense of close touch with God, it becomes a simple matter. We have lost time beating the bush, hunting here and there, casting about in strange places, seeking in some dark corner or distant view to find God. And behold, he was here all the time, close with us, "within you," Jesus said. We need to come

to our spiritual Lourdes and throw away our crutches of device and convenience and rise up and walk—with God! The crutches have been of some use. Ritual, ceremony, routine social worship, æsthetics, all good in a way, but having used them and passed them by, we come at last to our place of power and rise up and walk with Christ. For those who cannot go beyond the symbol, or who do find help in the externals of religion, let them be as good and beautiful and true as possible. But ask us not to tarry long with ceremonies when direct fellowship with the Father awaits us.

The *peace* of God keep our hearts and minds in knowledge and love.

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